







## THE NATURAL ORDER





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## *Essays in* THE RETURN TO HUSBANDRY

*by*

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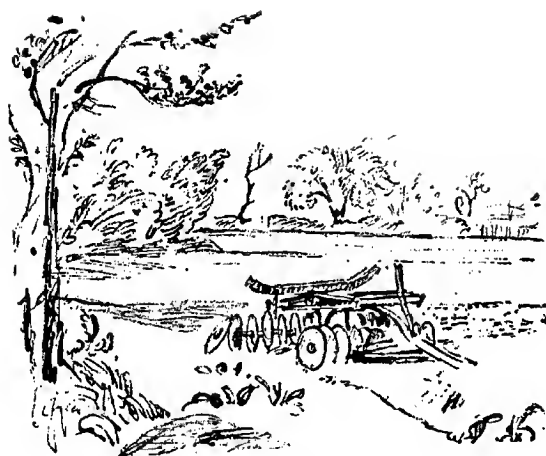


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# INTRODUCTION

By H. J. MASSINGHAM

## I

'RETURN to Husbandry'—the obvious reaction of 'the man in the street' to such a title is to wonder what it means. It will suggest to him 'putting the clock back' to something indefinable and vaguely associated in his mind with hock-carts, wassails, and reaping the corn with songs and sickles. For the word 'husbandry' is in itself almost obsolete like the word 'coney' for rabbit. That it could have the smallest relevance to his own life, still less that it could be conceived as an alternative to the attitudes, purposes, and organization of the society of which he is a member, such might well appear to him as wild a nonsense as crowning his head with a garland of flowers. Another suspicion is likely to be aroused in him by an almost instinctive antipathy to the word 'return.' The doctrine of progress which, however shattered by contemporary events, still exercises an uncritical and fatalistic influence, eschews all thought of return: it preaches onwardness, beneficial or the reverse, and, what is more important, leaving what is in the past for good and all behind.

Before, therefore, attempting to cope with these objections, or to present the 'return to husbandry' as it is set forth in the pages of this book, I think it is editorially necessary briefly to indicate what it is to which this title is an alternative. I am helped to an answer by two books published this year: *The Road to Serfdom* by Dr. F. A. Hayek and *Darkness over Germany* by Miss Amy Buller. The object of both these books, the one by taking thought and the other by intimate personal observation, is to correct the current assumptions and hypotheses as to the causes, origins, and significance of the Nazi dictatorship. The crudest of these are the inherent viciousness and brutishness of the Teutonic nature, the violent Vansittart view, and the dominance of the Prussian spirit. A more temperate theory analyses

the effects of defeat, frustration, unemployment, inflation, and the clumsiness of the Versailles Treaty upon a certain hysteria and distortion to which the German character is prone. While giving weight to the last and rejecting *in toto* the others, both these writers ascribe the present corruption of Germany to an entirely different derivation.

Miss Buller in her very circumspect and conscientious book does not generalize the German septicaemia in set terms. But it is perfectly clear from her first-hand reportage what it is—mass-mindedness. The power of Hitler she describes as proceeding from a mediumistic communion with the people driven by preceding strains and stresses into a pathological condition. His is a crowd-power, not an individual one, and in that sense he is certainly the spirit of modern Germany. He is the mystic demagogue, the living symbol of the neurotic masses, given direction, purpose, and triumph over their adversities in the figure of their medicine man. Dr. Hayek says the same, but he goes further, and hitches the German case to the malady of modern civilization as a whole. His contention is that the absolute State, of which Germany and Russia are the supreme modern examples, was the creation not of the Prussians but of the Socialists. The Socialist destruction of traditional Christian liberties in Germany took place nearly half a century earlier than when our own Socialism began to emerge in a dominant bureaucracy. So the path was made straight for the National Socialists, a term, though it is their own, very rarely heard nowadays. Their despotism was made possible by the combination of progress in technology with large-scale planning, in its turn made feasible by the growth of monopoly in heavy industry and pre-eminently in money. In Dr. Hayek's words:

In Germany . . . the growth of cartels and syndicates has since 1878 been systematically fostered by deliberate policy. Not only the instrument of protection, but direct inducements and ultimately compulsion, were used by the governments to further the creation of monopolies for the regulation of prices and sales. It was here that, with the help of the state, the first great experiment in 'scientific planning' and 'conscious organization of industry' led to the creation of giant monopolies, which were represented as inevitable growths fifty years before the same was done in Great Britain (page 34).

Individual freedom was never so deeply rooted in the German past as in our own, and its attrition, alike by centralized planning relying by 'necessity' on 'compulsion and force' and by the mass concepts of early German Socialism, was completed by the totalitarian State.

The merest glance at the most conspicuous phenomena of National Socialism discloses the superior validity of this view to those in common circulation. It was wholly an urban movement: Nuremberg, Munich, Berlin were its signposts. Hitler's bargain with the big industrialists made him the link between them and the masses. The most notorious example of the monopoly-cartel in Germany is, of course, the *Interessen Gemeinschaft Farbenindustrie*, a huge and indeed international amalgamation of chemical and allied industries. Its methods, ramifications, agreements, foreign connections, and independence of war or peace, revolution or settled government have been described in Joseph Borkin's and Charles A. Welsh's *Germany's Master Plan*, and there can be no question that, without its aid, the National Socialists could never have established their dictatorship. Prussia was always a landed aristocracy, and it is a contradiction in terms that it could have initiated a popular revolution. The 'blood' appeared in anti-Semitic racialism, but where is the 'soil'? It is notorious how peasant suffered from industrial Germany, and the first step of National Socialism on its accession to power was a lightning expansion of the industrial machine by large-scale planning to absorb the unemployed and prepare for war. The worst symptoms of German decadence—the mob-credulity, the arts and crafts of propaganda, the cultural mediocrity, the police system, the slogans and shibboleths, the crowd-psychology, the perverted religiosity, the mass-persecutions, the contempt for the individual, the corruption of youth, the cheap generalizations, the regimentation, the pooled emotionalism, the tom-tom Baal-worshipping festival, the debased education, and the rest—were all sacrifices of the personal life, personal responsibility, and personal freedom, all proletarian vices, all the machinery of State absolutism, all urban in origin. Everything that has subsequently happened—the fiendish devices of the industrial machine, the mass executions, the concentration

camp, the organized brutality, and other poisons—these are the logical extension of the previous phenomena. They are themselves the consequence of the loss of the person in the mass and the State, of free will and individual rights in the collective consciousness, and of the timeless rural values in industrialism. Others might suggest the loss of the Christian ethos in idolatry. But from their very origin the rural and the Christian virtues have been interlocked and only separated at the expense of them both.

An impatient reader might well ask: what has all this to do with a 'return to husbandry'? It has this to do with it. The German mass and the German State cannot be rightfully considered as an isolated volcanic eruption. In medical terms, they are a cancer from abnormality of growth in the whole body of modern civilization; in pictorial ones, they are a caricature of its features; in spiritual ones, the nemesis of a wrong way of living. It is plain that not dissimilar symptoms have appeared in industrialized Russia, notably in the 'liquidation' of the kulaks or yeomen-peasants.

Are they altogether absent from ourselves? Monopoly, which the Elizabethans regarded as the least venial of economic sins, spreads like flood-water over individual businesses and undertakings, and Dr. Hayek pertinently remarks: 'What our generation has forgotten is that the system of private property is the most important guarantee of freedom, not only for those who own property, but scarcely less for those who do not.'

Centralization and large-scale semi-totalitarian planning have already reached lengths which would have stupefied our forefathers, and worse is promised. Partly but by no means only as the result of war conditions, an arbitrary bureaucracy has made strides on seven-league boots. The same sinister *rapprochement* between the State and the combine that fixed Hitler in his seat is developing. At least the elements of mass-psychology are present in our vast urban proletariat, of which only a small minority remain skilled artisans, a pre-requisite of independence. The issue of money, whatever the Treasury may say, is still a private monopoly, and the English Mammon, if not a specialist in blood sacrifice, like the German Moloch, is

part of the same pantheon. The vulgarity of commercialism, if less blatant than in Germany, is omnipresent. Local self-government is vanishing under our eyes, and the liberty of the person in pressing danger.

Germany has had two revolutions in one generation, the Social Democratic and the National Socialist, the one undoubtedly preparing the way for the other. We have had none, but our attitude to past values and principles and traditions and distinctions and varieties is a revolutionary one. Our people are not thinking in terms of self-help and personal responsibility, but of social services and security which can only mean the authoritarian State. And as our bureaucracy penetrates deep into family life, so does our industrialism into agriculture, which is something different in kind from it. If Germany is an extreme example of the industrial war machine, our own country has become an extreme example of the industrial peace machine, and the less said about our peace of 1918-39 the better. Germany for all her romanticism is being covered with the sands of a pitiless automatism. What of ourselves?

What with all these analogies and similarities prevents us from falling into the degradation of modern Germany? There can, I think, be only one answer—the greater depth and rootedness of our rural traditions, our profounder and more experienced sense of individual and institutional liberties derived from strength of character, and our richer cultural inheritance. These are all now overlaid by the money-power, by excess urbanism, and by our stupid and partial self-inoculation with the totalitarian virus. Paradoxically, our selfhood, up to recently more industrialized and so blunted than that of any European nation, is founded upon something utterly different from the commercialized mass-State, that grinds human nature down to one dull mediocre level. 'I begin to think,' wrote H. M. Tomlinson in *The Sea and the Jungle*, 'the usual commercial mind is the most dull, wasteful, and ignorant of all the sad wonders in the pageant of humanity.' It is an individual, group, and civic freedom springing like a fountain out of a rural base. We carried this over into our industrialism when we betrayed and deserted our agriculture by the Enclosures and the 'workshop of the world' fetish, and

it at once took the egoistic form of *laissez-faire* individualism. Now this itself is being submerged by the technocratic Power-State. How then can we recover not our former state but ourselves? The answer is by a return to husbandry.

More than a quarter of this book is devoted to the issue in its various aspects of restoring our agricultural self-sufficiency. This was destroyed by the acquisitive economics of farming out foreign soils to feed or rather mis-feed the mass-proletariat created both by the Enclosures and the Industrial Revolution. A usurious system was built up round this primary sin of abandoning our native land. It not only maintained itself by ruining our own farmers and pushing those of other lands into debt, but handed over all the power and credit in the community from the primary producer to the dealer. Examine the vested interests of this country, and it will be seen that they are nearly all clustered round the breeding of money, transport, distribution, and other secondary activities to the depression of the creative elements in a nation and the neglect of real needs. There are many reasons why this system has come to the end of an overlong tether—soil erosion abroad, liquidation of foreign investments, the building up of manufacturing industries in the countries that exported cheap food to us either to pay interest or exchange it with our industrial goods, and other phenomena. There are only two alternatives to it. One is that the State shall organize the whole country into a kind of gigantic exporting firm ('export or die'). It will hunt the world for markets which no longer exist and depend on an international money-shop, conscript fluid labour forces, dole out 'social services' as a palliative for serfdom, and finally crash or become embroiled in a new world war which will be the epitaph of all civilized communities. Such a policy only means that the State and the combine take the place of the *laissez-faire* individualist, with the cushion of 'social security' to soften the transition. New Presbyterian is Old Priest writ large in a Blue Book for gospel and a State Temple with a congregation of the money-changers for a church. The other alternative is a return to husbandry.

We gather, then, that 'husbandry' is a larger term than one

equated to the restoration of a self-supporting England, based on its own fertile soils and receiving what imports we need by the exchange of surpluses on the lease-lend principle. The proper balance of town and country, the full development of the home market, agriculture the *only* primary industry, the abandonment of the idiocy of long-distance farming by urban clerks and officials who try to cheat nature with their own little industrial gadgets, the recovery by the country of its indispensable self-government and thereby the recovery of local and personal responsibility, these are all contained in the term, husbandry. But its full meaning is not co-extensive with them, and has a wider circumference. The social creditors who propose to rescue the national credit from private monopoly and the debt-system by the issue of notes to balance production with consumption are preparing one way for a return to husbandry, just as self-sufficiency is preparing another. But these measures are no more than preliminaries; all we can say is that the comprehensive practice of husbandry is impossible without them. Modern power-farming to meet the shortage of imports from abroad has little or nothing to do with husbandry, mostly nothing. It is merely an application to nature and the soil of urban and industrial methods of converting inorganic raw material into goods.

We shall not, in fact, begin to understand the meaning of husbandry unless we relate it to the first principles of the natural law, which is an earthly manifestation of the eternal law. This closely involves a study of natural processes by biological tests from which orthodox science, as distinguished from the newer science of certain pioneers whose guiding principle is the rule of return, has widely departed. Therefore, the meaning of husbandry is a fundamentally organic one, and neither chemical nor mechanical except in so far as chemistry and mechanics serve the living organism of nature and the soil. At present, their object is the forlorn one of mastering it, and this by overriding the natural law is doomed to failure by soil-exhaustion. Again, this meaning is 'ecological,' which means the relation of an organism to a particular locality which favours its due expression. The pattern of life worked out by pre-industrial rural society was



an unconscious obedience to ecological laws because the inter-dependent nuclei of the pattern as a whole were localized. A centralized agriculture except for purposes of supervision is a contradiction in terms, as well as of the natural law.

If we look well into the word 'husbandry,' we can risk a definition of it, namely loving management. It means man the head of nature, but acting towards nature in a family spirit. Nothing could be further from its meaning than the modern and scientific 'conquest of nature,' which is not only contrary to the natural law, but an absurdity. Modern secularism debases man by making him purely the creature of earth with no destiny beyond it. At the same time, it elevates this reduced animal beyond his station by making him the conqueror of nature—an altogether childish conception. These illusions of thought come from trying to break through first principles. But loving management exactly defines man's place in nature, and so honours the natural law, which regards man as chief of the creatures of earth, but subject like them to their Creator.

Such management includes personal and local responsibility, or it means nothing at all. The most effective way of ensuring that responsibility is by ownership, or, as second best, by security of tenure. Here, too, we have guidance and precedent. The old rural society, which acknowledged the natural law, though without working out its full implications in nature and the cultivation of the soil, possessed a system of distributed ownership, however unequal, in the home, in the workshop, and on the land. The family farm and the small workshop supplementing it, that is to say, are more likely to practise husbandry under the natural law than the manager of a larger unit who delegates authority and loosens responsibility.

I say no more than 'is likely to'; there is no need to dogmatize. What is unquestionable is that the institution of private property, responsibly held, is an integral part of good husbandry, and that the modern emphasis on irresponsible property gathered anonymously into a few hands and culminating in the combine has, step by step, accompanied the violation of the principles of husbandry. Thus, we bring the circle back to where it started from. Private property is the only guarantee of economic freedom,

and economic freedom is the basis of every kind of freedom. The National Socialist State of Germany is distinguished above all its other crimes by its murder of freedom, and every modern nation following along its totalitarian path, including our own, is by how far it follows this path the enemy of freedom. The organic connection between liberty and husbandry is clear. But, as loving management is a responsibility, it is a qualified liberty.

Husbandry, of course, is not confined to cultivating the soil, whether as farmer or gardener. But as cultivating the soil is the first and most important of all civilized activities because the life of society depends on it, and agriculture is the feet of the commonwealth, we naturally and properly think of husbandry in that connection. But the fullest use of our powers in other avocations, so long as they *are* vocational, is also a kind of husbandry. By so being, it follows that its total meaning is incomplete without allowing for its ethical and aesthetic associations, apart from the religious ones, implicit in its adherence to the natural law. It is needless to labour the point that the exploitation of the soil for cheapness or profit alone is ethically unsound. The 'life' of the soil, which is its organic humus, has logically retaliated upon the inorganic methods (namely, excess use of machines and chemicals) of this acquisitive and financial farming by dying, that is to say, by the dust bowl. To flout the natural law is in the end suicidal. Thus the laws of animate nature demand that man's desire to utilize them shall be governed by an approach which is implicitly ethical. To watch a craftsman persuading and humouring a piece of wood into a certain shape by taking into account its properties reveals both his harmony with nature and his unconscious acknowledgment that man's relations with nature have, in order to achieve practical results, to be moral. All true husbandry expresses a kind of reverence in its manipulations of natural substances, while the 'right' and the 'wrong' ways of doing things, recognized by the older type of labourer in his jobs about the farm, have an indirectly moral bearing.

The ethical and aesthetic aspects of husbandry unite in the term, 'a way of life.' For a way of life means both a pattern of behaviour and a certain rhythm of being in man's intercourse

with the earth. We observe, for instance, that when the natural law was operative in agriculture, the country speech, the songs and rituals, the objects made, and the buildings all obeyed another law, the law of beauty. Yet beauty was the very last thing that the pre-industrial countryman tried to capture. The buildings, the songs, the artefacts were made for quite other purposes than *for beauty's sake*, much less for ornament. Yet beauty is a property of them all, and it appeared as a kind of bonus upon the good work well done for the real needs of the community. It was an unfailing certificate for good husbandry. This something in the universal scheme of things which thus signals its approval of the good works of man has been withdrawn from industrialism and from the predatory power-farming that has hitherto accompanied it.

We arrive at the conclusion that a return to husbandry has nothing to do with reversion to a past regarded as old-fashioned and obsolete. The way the past comes into it is as an illustration, simply because, with all their shortcomings, our forefathers practised it. Husbandry is a means of recovering a certain order and mode of being which is timeless and universal, which is, in fact, a portion of man's nature. It is therefore the most practical thing in the world, since, in acting contrary to his own nature, man is destroying himself. It is perfectly obvious, for instance, that the National Socialist tyranny in Germany will reap the full nemesis for going to extremes in misinterpreting human nature and defying the natural law of life by a barbarous and super-mechanized version of its own. There is plenty of evil in the world outside Germany; there is plenty of evil in man in any period of the world's history. But there is all the difference in the world between trying and failing to live in accordance with the natural law, and substituting for it a gimcrack system of our own making which has no validity outside power-politics, industrialism, and the money market. This is exactly what modern civilization is trying to do; a return to husbandry is the way out.

How can it be accomplished? By conversion? Yes and no. It is certain that a profound change of view or heart is taking

place in this country, very notably as I know by personal experience in the Forces. But there is not the smallest sign of any response to it in the quarters that hold all the cards of power. Nevertheless, a return to husbandry is bound sooner or later to be achieved and the extent of the conversion will determine the length of time before it *is* achieved. But the real arbiter will be *necessity*. *Whether we like it or not, the issue of adequate food supplies and of proper nutrition can only be settled by the fullest development of home production on the one hand and by intensive husbandry on the other.* When Sir John Anderson in the June of this year remarked in the House of Commons that 'it was absurd to suggest the possibility of displacing all our vast volume of agricultural imports by home production' he was speaking on behalf of an obsolete world indeed, namely, for the economic parasitism of the nineteenth century.

That world is dead, and only politicians, economists, and financiers are unaware of it. The health of the nation has been half poisoned by preserved and doctored foods imported over vast distances and the soils where they came from exhausted by the big-business agriculture mass-producing them. Health-giving foods can only be consumed fresh by a system of local marketing and produced with all their food values intact by a 'loving management' of the soil. The foreign markets which were the lure of nineteenth-century economics have gone. It is not 'export or die,' but cultivate our own land or die. It can only be so cultivated by husbandry, by the intensive methods that peasants and yeomen practise where they are not crippled by finance. Large-scale industrial farming is by its very nature extensive, and will fail simply because it has not the capacity to produce enough food per acre. Only enough men on the land skilled in the arts of husbandry can produce enough food to safeguard the nation against a world shortage in food. This will not be scarcity artificially induced by the modern economic system, but a real one. A return to husbandry is a double wisdom, that of right values, but also of self-preservation.

## II

This book which advocates it is not a reissue of the booklet published under that name in 1943. It consisted only of thirty-two pages, containing four short initialled pieces, a book list, and a preface by the editor, Edmund Blunden. But its success was so immediate that it was resolved to build a much larger book on its foundations. The only connections between the two are that the contributors are drawn from the same group as initiated the booklet, and that part of the title and the book list are retained. The list of some fifty volumes I have brought up to date, and added thereto another thirty-five, all of them being books with which I am personally acquainted.

The present book is composed of fourteen full-length essays, signed by their writers, their subjects having been suggested and assigned by me as editor. Following this introduction they are arranged in four parts, the fifth and last being the book list. The first part, occupied by two essays whose writers are Edmund Blunden and myself, deals with what may be called the cultural aspects of the theme. No man in England is so well qualified to survey the traditional literature of the countryside as one who, in his own works, has so honoured its inheritance, and the husbandry of the past has received its own special crown at the hands of a literature richer in ruralism than any other in the world's history. My own province in this section has been to stress the qualitative element in the work of the husbandman. Mass production has sacrificed quality, and yet in the end quality is the condition of an assured quantity. Modern industry does not consider pride of work as an asset in output.

The next section of four essays considers the issue of self-sufficiency from a variety of angles. Mr. B. D. Knowles, the secretary of the Southampton Chamber of Commerce, and author of the powerful plea for a revision of our economic system called *Britain's Problem*, opens with an historical inquiry into the chain of events which turned us over from a self-supporting to a parasitic nation and now sacrifices agriculture to the heady myth of the export trade and the appalling burden of the National Debt. Mr. Philip Mairet, the editor of the *New English Weekly*, whose

Notes in it recall the lost summits of English journalism, analyses the economic and psychological situation at the present time in relation both to biological realities and to the official trade policy of the future. His analysis of what he has called 'the technological fallacy' discloses an intellectual power and range which speak for themselves. But his whole essay is important because it recalls us to the truth that the 'problem' of western society as a whole is a cultural one. That culture can only flower into constructive modes of thought and action upon a basis of husbandry. The supreme genius of Shakespeare proves it. Behind its utmost explorations of the human spirit lay home—the ancestry and environment of the Warwickshire yeoman. No living man has had so extensive an experience of self-supporting farming enterprises and communities both at home and abroad as Mr. Philip Oyler, the agent of the Verney Estate. He here outlines in his simple and forthright fashion the practical possibilities of national self-maintenance from the point of view of the farmer. He shows how we could enrich our soil into a condition of fertility far superior to the second- and third-rate standards of to-day, and just what we could do in producing a variety and prodigality of fresh foods.

Mr. Easterbrook's essay here printed is not the same one as he originally sent at my request, because I did not consider it quite suitable for the purposes of this book. It is a corrected version of an address he gave in December, 1943, to the Industrial Christian Fellowship. It so impressed me that with his permission and the Fellowship's I converted it by a few minor changes and deletions from the spoken to the written word. Mr. Easterbrook is extremely well known as an agricultural correspondent and writer; he has been in personal touch with farming conditions in various parts of the world, but his contacts with the everyday farming world have never blunted his vision. In this eloquent paper he expresses what it is, the redemption of our farming from financial bondage and its proper place in the national economy as the fountain of wealth that waters industry, nourishes the people, and 'is essential to the spiritual life of any community.'

Part III represents the transitional stage from general







considerations of values, policy, and economics to particular illustrations of husbandry and its reverse in the life of the country. The title I chose for this bridge between the two main portions of the book was 'Is Modern Farming Unsound?' Mr. Howard Jones, who very knowledgeably reviews this vital question, is a large fruit grower, nurseryman, and market gardener in Hampshire, particularly noted for his virus-free strawberries, and one of the founders of the Farmers' Action Council. He grows a great variety of fruit on one hundred and sixty acres, has forty acres down to corn, roots, and grass, keeps a herd of pedigree Wessex pigs, feeds yarded cattle in winter, and uses large quantities of composted town refuse in addition to the pig and cattle manure. In this essay he examines numerous aspects and branches of modern farming practice by the supreme test of whether or no they conform not to the rules of good husbandry (there are no formulae in it), but to the right principles that govern it. His essay thus looks back to the earlier pages of the book, and at the same time introduces the reader to the fourth, longest, and last section.

This is headed by Mr. J. E. Hosking's essay on 'Mechanization and the Land.' I regard it as of great importance for its theme, for the writer's method of treating it, and for his exceptional qualifications in so doing. Mr. Hosking is a Kentish farmer of Cornish farming stock for generations. Forced to relinquish his farming by the great depression between the wars, he entered the milling business, but his mills were put out of it by the roller-mill combine. He became a seeds merchant, and a foremost specialist in their cultivation. He is now the President of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, the Director of three flax mills, and one of the most prominent selective seeds growers in the country. He brings farming and science together by his pre-eminence in both, and was one of the first farmers in England to use a tractor. He therefore speaks with authority on a subject which occupies the mind of agriculture more than any other. The special interest of his essay is that he tackles the issue of machinery on the land as *inefficient* unless strictly controlled and subordinated to human skill and the horse. He thus offers powerful aid to those who against the tendency of the whole age

are urging the claims of husbandry as the only practical form of agriculture that in the long view of the long run really works. It is the pragmatist solution, but there is true vision and insight behind it.

As the author of a biological classic, *Look to the Land*, Lord Northbourne, another Kentish farmer in that county of great farmers, needs no introduction. His theme is the decisive relation of soil fertility to human health, both in body and as a social organism. With great skill and knowledge he expounds the association between these, a sane economics, and a regeneration of the spirit. He follows appropriately upon the heels of Mr. Hosking by pointing out 'the purely economic conception' of that most dangerous of terms, 'efficiency.' Mr. Michael Graham is the author of yet another book that transcends the fashionable and passing hour—*Soil and Sense*. In it he explored deep into the subtle interplay between the animal and the pasture it grazes and here he carries that most fruitful inquiry yet further. Mr. Graham is an important contributor to a book called *The Natural Order* because he has seen rather better than even Sir George Stapledon that Robert Elliot's famous Clifton Park experiment was one of the greatest landmarks of agriculture in its long history. If modern farming had followed Elliot, there would not have been much wrong with it. But it has not, and it is Mr. Graham's mission to recall the Elliot truths to a faithless generation, and develop them.

Mr. Gardiner comes next, and his name is familiar as a landowner who has done wonders with his estate at Springhead, not only running it organically, but making it a centre for rural education in a pattern of living. One of his most considerable works on this estate has been the reforestation of derelict woodlands, and no living man can speak with greater authority on this theme. He pursues it here with distinction, power, and a very wide historical knowledge, not only presenting an expert view on woodland reclamation, but indicating its intimate connections both with the farm as an organic unit and with the true principles of husbandry. He is followed by Mr. Adrian Bell on a subject which he has also lived and indeed immortalized by lifting it into our permanent literature. He is the small farmer

writing about what may be called the keystone of the structure of husbandry—the small farm. Here he discusses with his unrivalled knowledge and experience its powers of adaptation to changed conditions, its relative use of machinery and horses, its products, its live-stock, its labour, its thrift, its individuality, its general economy, and its incomparable superiority over 'All-Mechanized-Million-Acres-Ltd.'

Mr. Henry Warren, whose charms as a country writer, living portraits of countrymen, and familiarity with the Essex corn-belt are part of contemporary rural literature, describes the impact of the industrial machine and the industrial mentality upon the village. His essay comes properly after Adrian Bell's because the latter part of it is a persuasive plea for the farm worker's recovery of ownership as the due reward for his varied skills and labours. For this worker to have become a rural proletarian is flying in the face of a tradition of more than a thousand years, if it does not go back a great deal further than that. Among other acute and first-hand observations he points out the effect of industrialism in making 'the work of the fields anti-social.' This again is an assault upon the traditional countryside, whose every activity both in work and in play had a social background. The Earl of Portsmouth's services to the cause of the land in all its diversity of aspects, and both as writer and active responsible landowner, are so well known that he has become a national figure. In this, the last of the essays in the book, he recapitulates and condenses what is set forth at large in his notable book, *Alternative to Death*—what the charges, duties, and cares of the resident estate owner towards his land and his tenantry are. This indeed is the traditional mission of the landed gentry—to build up happy and creative little commonwealths on their estates, each in itself a microcosm. This stewardship was broken by the Enclosures and husbandry deeply suffered with it. Lord Portsmouth has dedicated himself both by his thought and by his example to restoring them both.

This then is the tally. I would not dream of claiming that it is a complete survey of so wide-acred a theme as the return to husbandry. It is hardly more than an introduction to it, and I was

inevitably restricted by the genesis of the book. Its idea was incubated by one small group composed of only twenty-four persons, and the contributions were limited to them. Even with their variety of professions—farmers, landowners, editors, writers, publishers, and a great artist, Mr. Thomas Hennell, whose illustrations here are suffused with the spirit of husbandry—it was impossible to cover the whole field. I would myself have welcomed an extension of the book to other writers I could name; I would have liked to have had further essays on such subjects as Rural Education, Soil Treatment, Local Marketing (indispensable to the economy of self-sufficiency), Intensive Cultivation and the Mixed Farm, the Utility of Wastes, Sewage, Bread, and Craftsmanship.

The last is missing owing to the sudden and severe illness of one of the contributors, Mr. Jeffrey Mark. I was particularly anxious to get an essay on bread. The stone-grinding country mill used to be the navel of localized husbandry. When it was wantonly destroyed by the trade war of the milling combine, the self-supporting rural society fell to pieces, while the removal of the wheat germ by the industrialized roller-mill made a white bread scandal more injurious in its effects than the more restricted range of the white slave traffic. But I failed to get this essay, and I much regret it. I have two further technical references to make. I have not hesitated to edit the manuscripts where I felt they needed it in the interests of the book as a whole, and I have added a few footnotes here and there in them. Lastly, I owe a large debt of thanks to all the contributors for readily falling in with my requests, and a special one to a member of the group, the novelist and publisher, Mr. E. F. Bozman of Messrs. Dent. In a by no means easy task, he has shown me the greatest possible consideration throughout.

Notwithstanding these limitations, I believe that this book is a very much needed and effective introduction to a great theme. It is likewise a profession of faith in a New Order which, unlike all the others in political or economic currency, is concerned with fundamentals and intended to be a development of an Old Order which only in the fancy of illusion can pass away.

*June 1944.*



## PART I

### I. THE RURAL TRADITION

By EDMUND BLUNDEN

'BUT times are alter'd.' The alarm has been sounded before, and was not new when Goldsmith in *The Deserted Village* cried out against the 'economic system' which threatened the life of the countryman. It was not new when Bishop Latimer preached, and contrasted the circumstances of his father, a yeoman, with those of the tenant who had followed him in a period of 'monstrous and portentous dearth.' Thomas Hood a hundred years ago wrote a cheerful poem on some of the village worthies discussing the meaning of 'agricultural distress,' and his rustic friend John Clare again and again protested that 'enclosure like a Bonaparte' had struck a deadly blow against the simple sufficiency of cottagers like himself. In this respect he might be surprised to find Robert Southey agreeing with him: 'Old tenants have been cut down with as little remorse and as little discrimination as old timber . . . and the moral scene is in consequence as lamentably injured as the landscape!' Southey was better able than Clare to support his broad contention that 'the present state of society, by rendering agriculture a branch of great commercial speculation, has worsened the general condition of the agricultural class.'

A full anthology of these lamentations for the land up and down the centuries might surely be compiled, and if in its direct action it would be a little saddening, yet it might on a different view serve to make us approach the problem of the countryside to-day with something of reassurance. After all, like tyrants and popular superstitions and the breaking of nations, the malady which we are often aware of in the state of rural England has befallen her before, and she lives, and indeed has brilliant aspects and days of most promising vigour. Most acute observers, the William Cowpers and the John Halshams (if *Idlehurst* is not

overcharged with some personal melancholy) have been inclined to foretell disaster, and still there is an agricultural England of credit and renown. Perhaps the problem that besets this much tried and harassed countryside now is not that which made men like John Clare feel at once impoverished and degraded; not that which made the farmer in *Macbeth* hang himself upon the expectation of plenty; I must leave it to be set out by those qualified to define it in the forces now converging on every farm in every county. That there are men, and not a few of them, who have identified and estimated these varied and tremendous menaces, and who are diligent in the defence and the advancement of our proper tradition, is a glorious encouragement.

It is glorious, and it is not surprising, that these defenders and restorers exist among us. They themselves are part of the tradition which they recognize as vital not merely in England, but all over the world. In England it has been a stronger and at the same time a more gracious growth than elsewhere; the world might reconnoitre our cities and towns without being moved to enthusiasm or abashed into discontent, but our villages still in the main announce to the senses of the impartial a grandly capable and delightfully successful tradition. Just now I was touching upon one or two of the anxious writings about English agriculture and its circumstance which have so often found their occasion; and yet one thing is certain about them—they demonstrate how highly the tradition has been valued all along, and how profoundly the Englishman has felt any signs of its being ended by neglect, by false philosophy, or by the events of history.

Naturally the excellent writers who have been concerned with this theme have not all been of subtle parts, and many have been more limited in their expression of the tradition than Goldsmith was. He, exquisitely intelligent, and long in the habit of seeing a subject in its many bearings, described in *The Deserted Village* almost everything that a good husbandry sustains—not only its cultivation and supply, but its 'bloomy flush of life,' its decorum, its diversion—the education which it offered and which was never held cheap, the religion which went hand in hand with good sense and practical benevolence. In a word, Goldsmith was declaring, with a passion to be felt in the strength of his phrases

and his rhythm, that agriculture is a way of life as nearly perfect as man can discover. His creed of the soil was that which is still glowing within the minds of those who of necessity and by disposition speak mainly as experts of farming. It would be vain to expect an equally wide comprehension, or at least the expression of it, in many of our old writers on British agriculture. They would have fought for the same tradition as zealously and more knowingly than he; but they stuck to its less spiritual values. 'Agriculture (the source of solid wealth)' perhaps covers most of their conscious thinkings on it. To that might be added what one of them pointed out to the Prince Regent in wartime, that if certain tracts of waste land were opened for tillage, there would be corn crops, and

these measures would soon convince our inveterate foe, that we have nothing to dread from his threats; and his endeavours and his intrigues to shut the ports of Europe and America against us, and to deprive the kingdom of a supply of that necessary article would be of no avail, as we might then laugh at his threats, and brave his defiance.

It is not always so much the matter of our old-school farmers turned authors that conveys their love of the country and its best treatment, as the manner. They were happy men wherever they looked, and critically they were bound to look, on the affairs of the farm; there is energy and enterprise in every sentence. The author by profession will often pause in admiration over their vocabulary, so lively and real—one may see it still in a measure in the posters of farm sales—and envy those whose tradition includes a constant aptitude in the keen and hearty word. In a practical bibliography of husbandry for the present time there is no place for them—even Arthur Young and his surveys and farming calendar may scarcely claim it; and their number is considerable. But those who would hear the Georgic tradition of England speak in its strength and ability from long ago may do so by opening their books. Of course they are sometimes convicted of local patriotism! A fault that really becomes a virtue, it has done much to uphold and enrich the variety of our villages; it has animated their craftsmanship and their ingenuity, characterized their streets and their gardens, started their music



and their sport. But hear William Marshall, whose *Rural Economy of Norfolk* came out two years before the crash of the French Revolution: he is always in the same temper, and we choose anywhere in his journal:

April 20, 1782. There is an alertness in the servants and labourers of Norfolk, which I have not observed in any other district. That 'custom is second nature' is verified every hour. How quick and alert are the tradespeople and handicraftmen in London! They will dispatch as much business in a given time as the very same people, had they been bred in some parts of the country, would have done in twice that time. The case is similar with the Norfolk husbandman. Whilst a boy, he is accustomed to run by the side of the horses while they trot with the harrows. When he becomes a plowman, he is accustomed to step out at the rate of three or four miles an hour: and if he drive an empty team, he either does it standing upright in his carriage, with a peculiarity of air, and with a seeming pride and satisfaction, or runs by the side of his horses, while they are bowling away at full trot. Thus both his body and his mind become active: and if he go to mow, reap, or other employment, his habit of activity accompanies him; and is obvious even in his air, his manner, and his gait.

And then for other scenes and their inferiority:

On the contrary, a Kentish plowman, accustomed from his infancy to walk, whether at harrow, plow, or cart, about a mile-and-a-half or two miles an hour, preserves the same sluggish step even in his holidays; and is the same slow, dull, heavy animal in every thing he does.

Still, the Kentish plowman knew something, or his brothers did; for it was not very long afterwards that Lord Byron saluted his part of the country as

. . . like a garden,  
A paradise of hops and high production.

A few weeks ago I was watching several of these Kentish men busy, as I have known them so many years, some hop-stringing and some with the dung-carts; what dexterity and diligence, what speed when it was needed, what a good pace without hurry, and what cheerful talk and action! All was ancient, more ancient than the apple orchard with its crimson bloom in glorious multitude (it had escaped the frost up there on the hill!) and the nettles in their usual ditches and corners, and the cows and sheep and lambs among the lime-washed tree trunks; all was new with

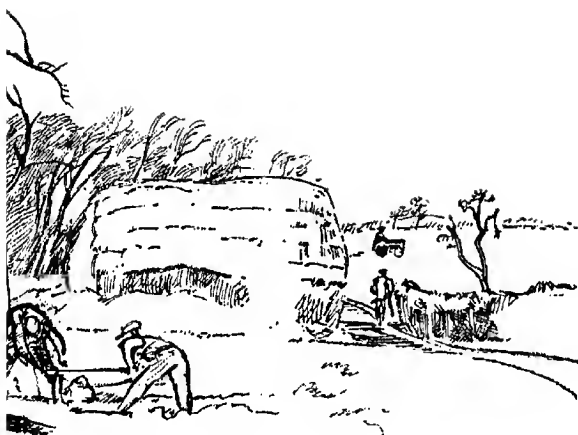
the new season, and the continued mastery of man brought up to know what will prosper in the long run and when to remember what had been the golden rule before.

William Barnes, the poet of Dorset, exactly a hundred years ago, published a first collection of verses in the dialect and upon the work and play, the wisdom and experience of the people about him; in his preliminary dissertation he had a hit (in his gentle way) at 'the not uncommon notion that from the plough towards the desk, and from the desk towards the couch of empty-handed idleness, is an onward step towards happiness and intellectual and moral excellence.' If we would search out the sufficing interests of our rural communities in the past, the fullness of life which they enjoyed in spite of hardship and limitation, the prevailing health and worth of their secluded humanity, the songs and sketches of this poet are a means to that end. No wonder that Hardy, who himself revealed the rural tradition in a more imaginative and audacious kind of writings, venerated his old friend Barnes. In the midst of all that Barnes reports from his lifelong acquaintance with country hearts, there stand clearly two themes: the country's wisdom, the country's worship. He is assured that men and women in those quiet places are thinkers through life, and inherit a store of admirable truths; he perceives that all their toils and vicissitudes incline them if not necessarily to hear the parson's saw, at any rate to hold by 'Providence their guide.' His view was that the country mind had not enough voice in the councils of the nation:

Vor if a feller midden be a squier  
He mid be just so fit to vote, an' goo  
To meäke the laws at Lon'on, too,  
As many that do hold their noses higher.  
Why shoulden fellows meäke good laws an' speeches  
A-dressed in fusti'n cwoats an' cord'roy breeches?  
Or why should hooks an' shovels, zives an' axes,  
Keep any man vrom votèn o' the taxes?  
An' when the poor 've a-got a sheäre  
In meäkèn laws, they 'll teäke good ceäre  
To meäke some good woones vor the poor.

And as for the great scheme of things surrounding and including every hamlet, Barnes interprets that simplicity of country doctrine which after all is as far on the way to a daily religion as





man has got. He imagines a countryman looking back over his life's succeeding stages, and considering that our future is eternally concealed from us, with this conclusion:

An' when I took my manhood's pleâce,  
 A husband to a wife's true vow,  
 I never thought by ncáme or feâce  
 O' childern that be round me now.  
 An' now they all do grow vrom small,  
 Drough life's feàir sheàpes to big an' tall,  
 I still be blind to God's good plan,  
 To pleâce em out as wife, or man.  
 O thread o' love by God unwound,  
 How He in time do bring things round!

It is Barnes who celebrates in verse 'our fathers' works,' which even now underlie the life of our land, from the bridge to the barn and the church to the osiery. I wish he might come again to do justice in a new poem to that museum of country implements which the editor of this volume has made, not simply to prove that there *was* a tradition of wonderful skill and equipment, but that there *will* be if the usurping mechanisms or rather their foolish commanders are resisted in time. What could be a more delightful, and at the same time a more eloquent comment on a triumphant tradition than Barnes's lines on 'the girt wold waggon uncle had'? It was a marvel (and so are many not yet past use):

Upon his head an' tãil wer pinks,  
 A-painted all in tangled links;  
 His two long zides wer blue,—his bed  
 Bent slightly upward at the head;  
 His reàves rose upward in a bow  
 Above the slow hind-wheels below.

And then,

Vour hosses wer a-kept to pull  
 The girt wold waggon when 'twer vull:  
 The black meàre *Smiler*, strong enough  
 To pull a house down by herzuf,  
 So big, as took my widest strides  
 To straddle halfway down her zides;  
 An' champèn *Vì'let*, sprack an' light,  
 That foam'd an' pull'd wi' all her might;  
 And *Whitevoot*, leàzy in the treàce,  
 Wi' cunnèn looks an' snow-white feâce . . .

Barnes does not leave the matter there, but goes on to describe the vast and valuable labours, the harvests, the merry occasions which the old wagon had seen.

The belief that Hodge was a serf-like creature with a mortal terror of his masters is not supported by old observers of him and his independence. I glance once more into the pages of J. Coker Egerton, sometime rector of Burwash. He has a tale that, when the Prince Regent was returning from some joyous expedition into Sussex via Burwash, the bells were not rung, 'and for our lack of loyalty we fell under the royal displeasure.' The ringers were quite willing to explain. 'They had rung for him when he came thro' the first time, and he gave them no beer, so they weren't going to ring for him again; not likely!' Again, Egerton mentions a retired army officer who acquired 'one of our farms' and, understandably enough, ordered his men about in barrack-yard tone. He soon admitted 'that he would far rather command a regiment of soldiers than one Burwash labourer.' Incidentally, since one hears continually that the wireless has made England music-loving, it is noteworthy that Egerton writes: 'One of our principal indoor resources is music, and though the standard which we reach is not very high, the enjoyment obtained from music in our parish is, I believe, very considerable.' It must have been, for one of his choir-boys after hearing *Angels ever Bright and Fair* at a village concert remarked: 'I say, Tom, I like that better than buttered beans.'

Perhaps the simplicity of these observations on the rural tradition with the help of one or two of the many who have written upon it will be pardoned in one who was young in a place which had not lost it—and it was a happy place. It would have been astonished to hear, then, that it might be suddenly cut off from its past, forced into some queer new uncertain way, by the violence of progress. That it should cease after so many years to bake its own bread, brew its beer, make its boots and shoes, shear its sheep, have its own grammar school, would have appeared merely wrong. With those curtailments I cannot help noticing that something else has happened: the skill and delight of the community in keeping itself entertained within its own bounds have declined. Its own libraries have fallen away, its music is nothing

near the former zealous concerts serious or jovial. Adaptation to be sure to the shifting sands of this century has been rapid—that would be so with a people so lively and purposeful. Still, something lacks in all ways since the tradition was so heavily impaired. It is not at all my tune to say that the details of the past in our countryside should all be kept; but we have to credit the experience of many yesterdays with some larger ascertainings of what is best and happiest. There is a study of *The English Village* from 1750 to 1850 by Dr. Julia Patton which employs the literature of that period more widely than was possible here, and though I cannot accept without reservations the excellent author's words, 'the old servitude, the old apathy,' I borrow with gratitude her conclusion that 'the old peasant life of the co-operative village may be gone forever, but its freedom, its courage and self-respect and dignity, must in some way return.' That way is unmistakable. It is the restoration of the land itself into the charge and the lovingness of those who have given their whole being to it.



## II. WORK AND QUALITY

By H. J. MASSINGHAM

Unless we can bring men back to enjoying the daily life which moderns call a dull life, our whole civilization will be in ruins. . . . Unless we can make daybreak and daily bread and the creative secrets of labour interesting in themselves, there will fall on all our civilization a fatigue which is the one disease from which civilizations do not recover. So died the great pagan civilization; of bread and circuses and forgetfulness of the household gods.

From a broadcast by G. K. CHESTERTON in 1934.

FOR the sickness of modern society many causes have been assigned. In the confusion of voices it is no light task to try and disentangle the immediate from the ultimate in order to find a common denominator underlying them all. Yet first cause or causes there must be behind their secondary or more remote effects, themselves defined as causation. It or they will not be discovered without a broad diagnosis of the malady itself whence its mainspring may perhaps be inferred.

Without proposing to offer more than a tentative verdict, I should be inclined to attribute the failure of modern society as an organism that works to its separation from reality. It is subject to a long series of illusions which paralyse the utmost of its endeavours either to stabilize itself or establish a harmonious mode of living. Among them are the illusions of Utopianism, of the Leisure State, of inevitable progress, of material wealth as welfare, of freedom and democracy without property. These illusions and others unnamed are the offspring of yet deeper ones involving the true nature of man and his right relationship with the earth he inhabits and with the changeless Absolute that penetrates but is not coterminous or coexistent with the finite.

Is it possible to define one of the primary causes for modern man's unawareness of reality? I think it is, and in so doing I but pick up once more a recurring if infrequent motive in modern thought since the Industrial Revolution. This is the divorcement of quality from work. Let me first of all apply its opposite



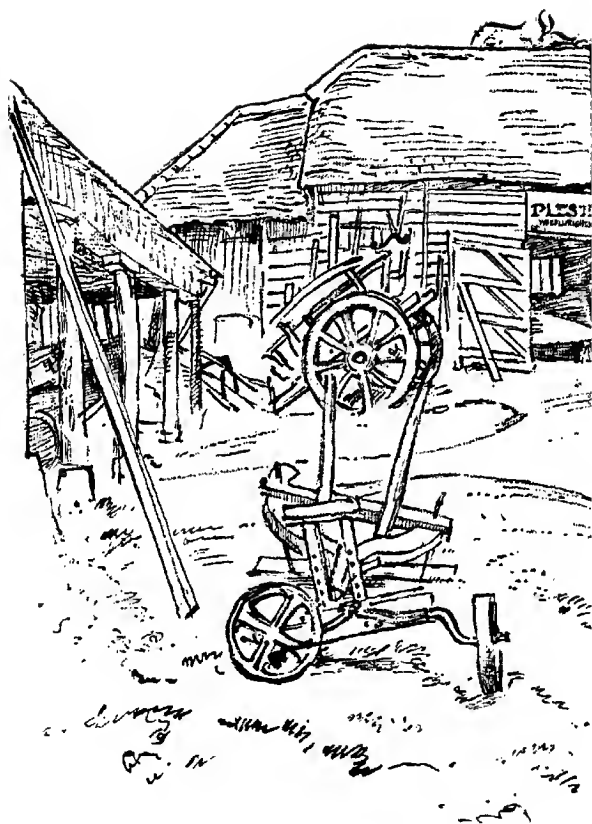
as a criterion or standard of reference to the most powerful, indeed omnipotent factor of modern life, namely urban industrialism. It is obvious that the methods of mass production are purely quantitative, while the mechanization which enables it to be so is based on sameness and repetition. It does not and cannot therefore consider the quality of what is produced because the essence of quality, however modest, is to be individual and unique. If an object has quality, it cannot by its very nature be quite the same as another object even of precisely the same kind. Quality is an expression of difference. Again, the incentive of production in an industrial society is material profit, that is to say, not the good thing in itself, but the good thing to be made out of it. Though quality may be an incidental of modern industry, it cannot by the very structure of society which has turned industry into industrialism be a primary purpose.

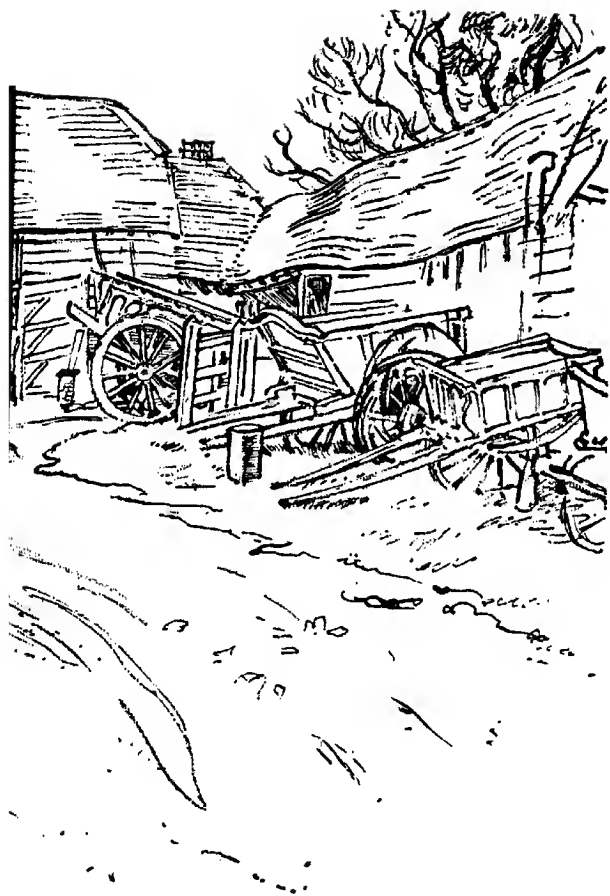
For this very reason such a society cannot operate without advertisement and salesmanship. If quality is not the first consideration in making or producing goods, special techniques have to be invented to dispose of them. Price-manipulation and lack of purchasing power in the buyer are other phenomena that demand such techniques, and these in their turn load the scales against quality. Moreover, at whatever price goods or manufactures in our industrial system are sold, the problems of time, labour, materials, methods, and processes all converge upon one end—cheapness. Cheapness at any cost, cheapness at the expense of nature, man, and the joint energies of them both. But quality is dearness, not in the sense to which it has been now degraded, but in the sense of value, worth, durability, and preciousness. A thing is precious by measure of the devotion, care, and workmanship spent upon it; it is precious by virtue of its quality. Quality to cheapness is as the lamb to the wolf. The theory of our age has been that the cheapest is the best; the age of quality will say that the best is the cheapest. 'A disposition for cheapness,' wrote Ruskin, 'and not for excellence of workmanship is the most frequent and certain cause of decay and destruction of art and manufacture.'

Modern industrialism likewise depends upon transport,

usually over vast distances, and this is detrimental to quality in two ways. Perishable goods, especially food, have to be preserved in order to be carried and so doctored and so deprived of their quality. Hence malnutrition must accompany industrialism. Secondly, to possess quality a product must, as the record of the past demonstrates, be in definite contact with if not propinquity to its destination, be that place or person: in other words, be made for some specific purpose and serve some particular use. Lastly, the tendency of industrialism has been not only for its power to be gathered into fewer and fewer hands, but for those hands to become more and more remote from the sources of their power, from the conditions of production, and from any association whatever with the thing made and the man making it. The development of business into combine and the dominance of finance over all exchanges must and does dehumanize all production, and quality postulates a personal and indeed intimate relation between maker and made. For that reason a small business is much more likely to be qualitative than a large. To create quality the maker must project something of himself into what he is making.

This brings me to the maker or worker. What has the modern urban factory-hand to do with quality? The answer is that about two per cent of his total mass has to do with it. I take the figures given from Sir Stafford Cripps's own estimate of the percentage of skilled labour engaged in what might well be regarded as the most highly skilled, and so the most qualitative industry that exists to-day, that of engineering. He speaks of this 'labour dilution' as a 'magnificent achievement.' But a glance backwards at man's qualitative achievements across recorded and unrecorded history reveals it as a tragedy more catastrophic even than modern war. For if man is ceasing to be a qualitative worker, he is ceasing to be a qualitative being: he is, in fact, ceasing to be man. Even the immensity of his sufferings in the modern world are a little thing in comparison with a deposition of this magnitude. For unskilled labour as machine-minding and nothing else is the antithesis of quality in it, and that quality can only be won by a man's control over and interest and pleasure in his work. The superiority of the guild to the





trade union was that it put the workmanship before what was paid for it.

Since man is born to labour, he has been robbed of his heritage, and so stricken in the quintessence of himself, which is to prove himself by his command over his material 'the paragon of animals.' The kernel of Sir George Stapledon's *Disraeli and the New Age* is contained in these words:

For a man to work without some feelings towards the material he handles, without pride in the accomplished task, no matter how trivial, and without interest in the final results of his toil, is one of the greatest tragedies that can come upon a human being. To work without interest or any feeling of love is to be denied the enjoyment of perhaps the greatest pleasure this life has to offer, and in the fact that such a high proportion of the workers of the world are denied, or deny themselves, this pleasure is to be found one of the chief causes of widespread social neurosis.

Modern intellectualism prescribes the formula of release from this evil enchantment as 'creative leisure.' Such signs are completely wanting from the contemporary urban world for the simple reason that such leisure is the necessary concomitant of such work. Shall figs be gathered of thistles or a fruitful leisure from a sterile labour?

This is not an argumentative, but an historical judgment. However chequered the annals of our pre-industrial countryside, and granted its sporadic explosions of barbarity and superstition, its chain of village communities and market towns that were the nuclei of the several groups, was without any question a qualitative society. So was that of the larger towns. But the country provides an overwhelming illustration because it really was the plinth or foundation of the whole national structure. 'How can the arts flourish,' wrote Herder, 'when the culture of the fields is neglected?' The *culture* of the fields: the interplay between industry and agriculture, poetry and practice which established a cultural pattern, humanly conforming to and adapted from the rhythms of nature, but acknowledging a greater design beyond it. To study this society historically and impartially (as the progressive bias cannot do) is to educe from it an impregnable generalization upon the proper relations between work and leisure. So long as work is play, play becomes work.

If work is skilled and serves a common need; if the worker can exercise some control of the material from alpha to omega and possesses local familiarity with it; if he labours within a tradition of workmanship as often as not hereditary, his work is a form of play, his workshop is a shrine of quality, and beauty emanates from it as an inevitable by-product that appears to be accidental.

The point cannot be overstressed that these conditions were actually present. All manner of objects whose quality fostered their beauty were as common as blackberries in the rural England preceding the Industrial Revolution. The satisfaction they gave both to user and maker in its turn fostered their quality. Such play-in-work was bound to generate a work-in-play; the leisure of the countryman, that is to say, became a self-made co-operative activity which he worked to achieve as a reflection on another plane of his normal work:

For Sports, for Pageantrie and Playes,  
Thou hast thy Eves and Holydayes;  
Thy Morris-dance; thy Whitsun-ale;  
Thy Shearing-feast, which never faile.

An integrated society in which religion, nature, and necessity all play a patterned part within a given place cannot separate work and play, art and utility into disconnected functions, and their binding force is quality. But for the disintegrated modern who has separated work from quality, and put a capital letter to art, the synthesis of work and play is a lost concept. This is the nemesis of creative impotence.

Yet where agriculture still persists as husbandry it survives, though much impoverished. Even where the attempt of our age to apply a quantitative urbanism to a qualitative countryside has been successful, quality in work manifests itself like an asparagus shoot pushing through where the roadway beside which it grows has been widened. For without quality in soil which the countryman recognizes almost by instinct, it will not bear, and soil loses that quality when robbed of humus. Since humus cannot be retained in cultivated soil without the return to it of all wastes, there is no escaping the conclusion that this primary quality of earth is the indispensable condition of man's continued tenure of it. A certain quality in its tilth is as needful

for the seeds to germinate and mature; a quality in the plants that are brought to the harvest is disclosed by a string of subtle evidences; quality rears the beasts that feed upon them; quality in the food grown upon the earth and consumed by beast and man confers health and vitality.

Yet quality is not health nor vitality nor fertility nor husbandry nor skill nor interest and pleasure in the work done. It is more than all these things, though all are essential for its appearances. They are instruments, media, vessels for containing or expressing it. But it cannot be defined as a thing in itself, only as the leaven that leavens the lump or a bloom upon thoughts and the characters of things. We are forced, therefore, to regard it as ultimately spiritual, something immanent in phenomena, but not co-substantial with them, but having a timeless and transcendent origin. It comes, that is to say, by grace or by works, or by both in harmony, and to the humblest as to the noblest of living but also lifeless things endowed by it with a strange life of their own. Perhaps the most significant thing that can be said of it is that when come it does, it has a value greater than all the treasures of the world without it.

Husbandry simply means craftsmanship in the cultivation of the earth, and the relationship of the rural industry to agriculture is thus a double one. Not only is it interwoven with the land in a mutuality of give and take, but husbandry and craftsmanship aim in their dual spheres at one purpose only, namely, quality. And in husbandry this quality expresses itself in a multiplicity of operations all dovetailed into one another. It extends far beyond the fundamentals of preparing the ground, planting the seed, affording it the most favourable conditions possible for ripening, and in due time harvesting, ricking, and threshing it. It extends beyond the proper breeding and maintenance of farm animals. Experience in these processes is ineffective without discrimination and nicety of judgment. These demand control and co-ordination, and so the mastership and free will of the man on the spot. When the farmer is an official or a committee he is a bad farmer. Sense of place is indispensable for a qualitative husbandry, just as much as freshness and local distribution are to secure the quality of food. Both time and nature, again,

are partners with the husbandman. Unless he attunes himself both to their regulations and vagaries, quality will escape him. Let him attempt to 'conquer' either and the prize will not be quality. The more variety he imparts to his husbandry the nearer he will be to nature, and the nearer to nature the surer of quality. To husband his crops, to humour and guide rather than drive his beasts, to companion his men, to serve his land, these are quality's peace terms with him.

But without personal contact with them all, the elusive thing will not be his, since quality in man and his work is not only personal, but the unique flower of his capacity. This personal contact he is the more likely to exercise as the owner of a small farm than as the manager of a big, though this is by no means always so. Great or small, it all depends on what he does with it. And he can do nothing with it unless he counts himself responsible for it. Quality is the reward of responsibility. A man who achieves quality in his work is its responsible owner, whether he actually possesses it or not.

All these things, and others unnamed, are denied by such phenomena as the industrialization of the land, the dictatorship of the town over the country, the impersonal rule of officials, the assessment of husbandry in terms of commerce, the export of other than surpluses, nationalization which is nothing but absentee landlordism, the predatory philosophy of a civilization whose aims are material only. For all are quantitative both in idea and practice. To overburden the land with taxes is the same thing as to exploit it, and such 'efficiency' leads to the death of quality as surely as the modern chemical complex leads to the death of the soil. Such quantitative methods and approaches have been steadily accumulating and intensifying over a period of a hundred and fifty years, the period which has worked out the full logic of the Enclosures and the Industrial Revolution. We are thus witness of a progressive decline in the quality of work which discoveries and inventions have sometimes checked but not stayed. That eighty per cent of our beasts are incipiently or actively diseased is a fact too formidable to be offset by the new breeds of them or the ley to pasture them. The persecution of the agricultural labourer in the last century and



the loss of his land, his withdrawal from it in our own, have been progressive victories over the quality of work. Through all the ages, whether as peasant or landless labourer, he with the craftsman has been its natural and national guardian. There is a passage in F. E. Green's *A History of the Agricultural Labourer, 1870-1920*, which presents his history and just tribute:

That we still have skilled agricultural labourers amongst us we owe to their supreme quality of patient endurance, rather than to any wisdom on the part of the governing class. Robbed of his common rights by a succession of overwhelming Enclosure Acts; ill-nourished in his infancy and badly paid as a hired, landless labourer; degraded by a gang system of servitude barely distinguishable from slavery; deprived of any form of agricultural education; unrecognized as a citizen until 1884; the wonder is that the English agricultural worker has been able to retain any of his old traditional peasant-crafts after 150 years of divorce from the soil. Professor Thorold Rogers, one of our greatest authorities on industrial workers, stated in 1878 that the agricultural labourer possessed five or six more qualifications to the title of skilled worker than did the artisan; but no Government, apparently, took the slightest heed of his words. Professor Rogers might have added even more qualifications than five or six to the title of this skilled worker.

If the progressive decline of agriculture since the point-events of the Industrial Revolution, the Enclosures, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws has resulted in an equivalent decline in qualitative labour, how much the more so in the industrial centres! The question therefore resolves itself into whether such work is necessary to a civilization which has been busily engaged in sloughing it off like an old skin. It has been already inferred that work achieving quality is the nurse of character and a principal means both of safeguarding and developing the indwelling faculties and values of the normal and indeed average human person. It certainly made beauty a manifestation 'in widest commonalty spread,' as the meanest cottage no less than the proudest manse or house of God declares. It fostered economic liberty since good workmanship rested upon a multitude of small properties, and economic liberty on a propertyless basis is a modern chimera. Yet no less a craftsman than Mr. Francis Meynell has said that craftsmanship is 'a pure

anachronism.' So must be sought an even deeper justification for its existence than those I have already given.

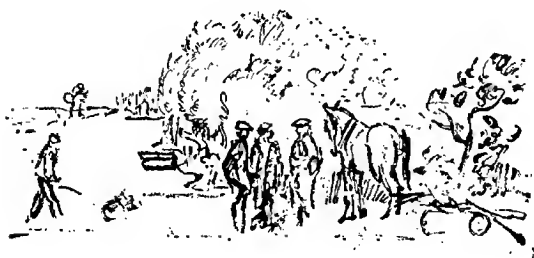
It has certainly been sanctified by religion in the most unequivocal of terms. The first chapter of the Book of Genesis concludes the story of creation with: 'And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.' No words could epitomize the meaning and quintessence of qualitative work with a more perfect finality. If we look in perspective down the vistas of the past we see that the kingdom of man with all its errors and tragedies has modelled itself upon this truth. His work has been qualitative ever since he became man and the artefacts of the predynastic Egyptian and the prehistoric Magdalenian have never been surpassed.

Turn again to the evolutionary biology which has been held to represent the negation of Genesis. It becomes apparent that the world of animate nature has as a whole emerged into a more qualitative being. The wild horse differed from Eohippus, its progenitor of the Eocene, by a progression in quality, some say by accident, others by design. None can deny that the emergence was qualitative. It is interesting to note how modern philosophy, in so far as it expresses the tendency of the times, has, in its attempt to graft its theory of progress upon evolutionary biology, left the quality out. H. G. Wells's ambition for man, for instance, is to make him god (*Men Like Gods*), and he becomes god by a kind of conquest of the universe. The way to godship is quantitative. Bertrand Russell's view, though the reverse of Wells's, is just as quantitative. As against Wells's grandiose Titanism he stresses the littleness and puniness of man dominated by the vastness, automatism, and unfriendliness of the universe. The qualitative view refuses both these versions; it allows for both humility and greatness; it accepts man's limited control of his material and environment, and his dependence upon a Creator, but ranges from the humblest craftsman to Michelangelo as exemplars different in degree but not in kind of quality in work.

It seems, therefore, that in forfeiting for other advantages man's heritage as a qualitative worker, modern civilization is affronting a universal law. It seems that God or nature or, if

you will, God and nature, have decreed that man, the highest being on earth, shall labour by the sweat of his brow not only for the necessities of life, but to achieve quality. And if we abandon quality for quantity, as we have done, we suffer the judgment, as indeed we are doing. For if the desire for quality be so deeply embedded in humanity, it cannot be frustrated without such chaos and catastrophe as we witness to-day. Mass-man engaged in mass-destruction is necessarily the antithesis of individual man engaged in making things of quality.

Husbandry, the basis of all national culture that proliferates from it, has been since the discovery of agriculture the matrix of qualitative work. When it fails to be so it ceases to be husbandry. A 'return to husbandry' controlling the machine is a necessity for the recovery of quality in work.



## PART II

### III. AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

By B. D. KNOWLES

All trade rests at last on the farmer's primitive activities.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

. . . I perceived that agriculture lies at the heart of civilization, and that a civilization that neglects it is foredoomed to extinction. To acquire this view I needed no arguments. I had but to read what had happened to the Roman Empire through and from that neglect. The ascendancy of urban capitalism exhausted the soil and degraded the peasantry, while the exploitation of virgin lands overseas was the means of feeding a Roman proletariat subsisting on slave-labour in place of our machines. That Roman story is frightening. . . .

*Remembrance*, by H. J. MASSINGHAM.

'THE key to the future lies in the past.' In order correctly to diagnose the strange sickness from which British agriculture has long suffered, it is essential to examine the patient's 'medical history.'

To gaze, then, into the past, is to become aware that, far away back in the Middle Ages, a small cloud appeared in the economic firmament. Its contours were disarmingly homely, embodying, apparently, nothing more formidable than a shortage of money in the royal coffers.

But the trouble persisted. It not only persisted: it grew. It grew to such disconcerting proportions as eventually to threaten England with complete disaster. For by the time King Charles II came to the throne the anachronisms of the English financial system had reached such grotesque proportions as to make it impossible for him to keep in adequate being that fleet on which, *Deo favente*, England's final destiny depended. While all the materials necessary for the country's defence were amply available, the money or credit by which alone those resources could be brought into play—taxation having reached its limits—was

lacking. A crisis of strange and unparalleled proportions was in the making.

Meanwhile, by adroitly and even shamefully shunning war, by pinching here and scraping there, King Charles II—who, masked though the fact was, nevertheless stood as the solitary bulwark between his rustic subjects and a 'new despotism' more powerful and more subtle in form than any previously known—somehow contrived to stave off the evil day of national bankruptcy.

But no sooner was the English crown on Dutch William's head than England found herself at war with France. That which Charles had avoided like the plague had now come to pass, with the result that by 1694 some new method of raising revenue had become an indispensable necessity if—to use Macaulay's words—'the liberty and independence of the nation were to be assured.' Notwithstanding prolonged and prodigious efforts to make it good, a deficiency of £1,200,000 had to be registered. At long last, like an overburdened camel, England had financially collapsed.

It was at this sombre moment in English history that the figure of one William Paterson suddenly emerged from the shadowy hangings to loom large and vulture-like upon the national stage. For here was a carcass. And it was a fat one.

Paterson's plan was simplicity itself. Golden sovereigns to the required tune of £1,200,000 were to be loaned to the Government in return for a yearly interest payment of £100,000. The bait proved irresistible. It was greedily swallowed, regardless of the hook—the hook being a condition that Paterson and his friends should be authorized to constitute a corporation to be known as 'The Governor and Company of the Bank of England' *with the right to issue notes to the value of the original loan.* Thus came into existence the National Debt system—originally a Dutch creation—whereby the annual interest *and the note issue* were strictly guaranteed on the security of the Government, Paterson and his friends having meanwhile made a snug little profit of £1,200,000 with the first stroke of the new pen. And as Government borrowings in the future must involve a similar practice,

it followed that, so long as Englishmen were willing to bear the originally small, but inevitably growing, tax burden which this novel arrangement involved, so long would England remain a carcass worth picking. Considerations of this kind apart, the effects of the change were stupendous. In the first place the sovereign right to create money—virtually the control of the national purse, which was ever the key to liberty—had been transferred to a private monopoly that was entitled to pursue a policy free from all Government interference. Furthermore, the creation of new money or credit being henceforth conditional upon State borrowing, the Paterson system could have no rational relationship with production or distribution. It followed that if certain changes took place in the old-time methods of production, the Government, bereft of the sovereign power to create money—the very lifeblood of a nation's economy—would be powerless to grapple with the situation that might, and did, in fact, eventually arise.

Search the chronicles of the times as one will, however, not one scrap of evidence is to be found to show that either in manor house or cottage there was any sort of cognizance that the Rubicon had been crossed—that new and hostile forces threatened the 'people of the plough.' On the contrary, never had England more reason to believe that the ancient foundations of its organic life were immovably secure.

From the moment of its Anglo-Saxon birth, the national economy had perforce been based upon the cardinal principle that 'England must live of her own whatever storms might rage without.' Nor had there been any departure from it. Indeed, what had originally been inexorably imposed by geographical necessity had latterly been unquestioningly adopted as an article of political faith. So it was that agriculture, in William III's time, as in the first of days, was still the queen of English industry, and that the vast majority of the population, like their fathers and their fathers' fathers, remained 'locked to the enduring earth.' Encompassed as of old by the great fields in which the crops were grown, the village still occupied pride of place as the characteristic unit of society. Of the rustic

scene as it stood—static and serene—Arthur Bryant has given us this exquisite picture:

England was still a land of great open fields . . . of little farms and sheep-cotes and . . . villages. Here men and their ways were unchanging, and the old cycle of the year, with its work and play, was unbroken, from the New Year, when the village boys came round with the wassail bowl to bless beast and barn and tool, through bleak Lent days and February-fill-the-dyke to the green joys of Easter; from summer wakes and Harvest Home and the Hock-cart, with its bacon, beer, and steaming frumenty, through November haze and the mystic rites of All Hallow Tide to the carols and the mumming players and the sweet wintry festival of Christ's birth. . . .

Microcosmic of England itself, and *mutatis mutandis* for the same compelling reason, the village was responsible for supplying the sum total of its daily needs, the myriad wants of husbandry—the nation's lifeline—being the primary and constant source of industrial activity. It was, therefore, out of the very soil that the craftsmen—the industrialists of the times—were born, 'every one of whose trades, were, in fact, in vital dependence upon and correspondence with Agriculture.' Indeed, so closely woven was the pattern of the primary and secondary industries of the old England that it was a matter of difficulty to detect where the one ended and the other began.

As to the happiness, harmony, and splendour that invested the whole scene, historians, both past and present, are at one. If Magna Carta had ushered in the springtime of Merrie England, the 'Glorious Revolution' had done nothing less, apparently, than herald the advent of perpetual summer. Even the 'small cloud' had somehow disappeared. 'George II,' said Edmund Burke, 'carried the glory, the power, the commerce of England, to a height unknown even to this renowned nation in the times of its greatest prosperity. . . . The most ardent lover of his country cannot wish for a happier fate than to continue as she was then left. . . .' 'It was a glimpse of a golden age of union and glory,' echoed Macaulay. Nor have the years brought any dissentient note.

The rural England of the old order [runs a notable passage by J. A. Williamson] comprised four-fifths of the population and

contained many grades of small proprietors . . . all imbued with that respect for themselves and others that springs from ownership . . . from having a stake in the soil. . . . All were closely knit together by common interests. . . . *A good harvest meant prosperity for all, a bad one that all tightened their belts together;* and the by-industries, the cottage spinning and weaving, *mitigated the worst of the misfortune.* . . . Political contentment was based on social contentment . . . and there was no disposition to question that happy state of affairs. Society, in the eighteenth century, was static, poised in a sort of equilibrium . . . a harmony . . . in the early nineteenth it had become a discord.

The emergent truth is unquestionable. Upon the mosaic, the organic foundation, of its native husbandry and native industry, our island had risen to internal and external greatness.

England's internal trade [said the discerning List] had developed in just proportion to its foreign commerce . . . individual freedom, economic security and independence had grown up without prejudice to national unity or national power . . . while the interests of the Crown, the aristocracy and the people, had become consolidated and united in the happiest manner.

Whatever the nature of the fate that was to overtake the unsuspecting yeomen of England, and whatever the defects—and they were great—of the eighteenth-century town, the old economic system stood for something unique. Not only had it triumphed over the problem of production, but it had succeeded in that in which our modern economy so tragically fails—it ensured that the people had primary access to the goods that their joint skill and effort from time to time produced. It was, indeed, this mastery over the lost art of distribution that constituted the central pillar of the economic habitation that rural England had built up for itself.

The secret lay in this: in the days of hand labour the production of a hundred pounds' worth of goods was matched by the creation of a hundred pounds' worth of purchasing power through the medium of wages or the equivalent of wages. In other words, the wages system monetized the whole of the national production, so that the quantity of money in existence at any given time was sufficient to enable the community to have maximum access to the goods that awaited consumption. By



this means, effect was given to the fundamental economic law—for there are economic laws as distinct from conventions—‘Consumption is the sole end, the crown, of all production.’

Nor was this the end of the matter. For a prosperous home market having thus been assured—a principal condition of sound export trade—England was placed in a position to export her *surplus* products in exchange for foreign goods of like value, thereby acting in strict conformity with the great canon: ‘The real object of international trade is precisely to raise the standard of living by distributing *surpluses of goods* among those who need them.’

The result was that down to 1765 England was an exporter of both primary and secondary products not only with incalculable benefit to her foreign customers, but to herself. Indeed, it was in its highly favourable two-way reaction, particularly in regard to the beneficial results conferred upon English agriculture and industry—in notable contrast to what happens to-day—that the intrinsic morality, reasonableness, and worth of the old economic system were strikingly demonstrated.

But with the birth of the Industrial Revolution a different story has to be told. Briefly, what happened was that the earlier age of manual labour was suddenly and unexpectedly superseded by the revolutionary era of power production, the effect being to precipitate the very dilemma to which reference has already been made. For labour-saving machinery being wage-saving machinery, too, proceeded to displace wages, thereby creating a deficiency of purchasing power in relation to the total value of production. Quite obviously, what was needed was the installation of a new piece of financial mechanism to supplement wages to the extent that was necessary to restore the equation between goods and money, and so enable the machine to function as the servant of humanity. But as G. M. Trevelyan has illuminatingly observed, that well-established world of which Dr. Johnson and Edmund Burke were the typical minds, could think, alas, only in terms of politics and literature, thus failing to observe that a revolution more profound than the political changes oversea that they deprecated was taking place in their own midst,

and was sapping the old English order without proper readjustment being made by public authority.

What happened? The machine having conferred upon its owner the power to make goods in endless quantities, and at prices far below those of the craftsman's, the way was miraculously opened up for the machine-owner to acquire riches on a gigantic scale. And being only human, men were tempted and fell. Willing sellers found ready buyers both at home and abroad. Quickly England became the workshop of the world and the home of the millionaire. But only at a terrible cost. Balked by the deficiency of public purchasing power from exercising its powers to benefit mankind, the machine was transformed into an all-devouring monster. Aided and abetted by its grim associate, the enclosure movement, it stalked here and it stalked there: through the farm: through the wheelwright's and the joiner's shop: through the smithy and through the water-mill: through the rustic arts and crafts: through the cottage industries which fed both home and export trade: through the beauty, the religion, and the song of the old England. And wherever it stalked fell a shadow—the shadow of unemployment and want. Deprived of his 'stake in the soil' and his spinning-wheel—the two things which had assured him of economic security and personal liberty—man, in increasing numbers, became a slave to the machine. For only thus could purchasing power be obtained.

Another development ensued. Exports connoted imports. And as the export trade grew mightier in volume a point was eventually reached at which the importation of raw materials failed to fill the British export bill. The cry of 'cheap food-stuffs' did the rest. It was all that was required to secure the acquiescence of a poverty-stricken public to the dumping of foreign agricultural produce at prices against which the British farmer could not compete. From that moment agriculture was doomed. One by one the stars of England's village life went out, while here and there in the ever-darkening sky appeared those dull red patches that told of old England's industrialization and shame.

The boats of England's ancient economy having been completely

burnt, England immediately became perilously dependent on foreign orders to provide the money to enable her citizens to consume the goods that streamed from the machines. In short, maintenance of the export trade at a maximum level had become an imperative necessity. Without it the Beveridge 'giants' of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor, and Idleness could not be held in restraint. And this, for reasons which will be made clear, was in any case impossible.

It was owing to this extraordinary circumstance that shortly before his death, Neville Chamberlain—then Prime Minister—informed British farmers that the Government could not hold out any hope for a long-term policy for agriculture. It is this identical factor that underlies the highly ambiguous attitude of the present Government to the same question. The unvarnished truth of the matter is that as things are, only in time of war can there be any hope for the British farmer. The reason is simple enough.

As in Charles II's and William III's day, war involves expenditure by the State on a scale vastly exceeding the taxable and loaning capacity of the nation: the quantity of money normally issued by the existing financial system proves grossly insufficient to enable the country's material resources to be employed in its defence.

The Government is accordingly compelled—as Governments have been since 1694—to 'borrow' the amount of the deficit from the Bank of England in accordance with the Paterson principle, the effect being to establish during wartime the necessary equation between purchasing power and the nation's productive capacity. The outcome is that the ability of the people to purchase is increased to an extent which transforms a penurious population into a mass of eager buyers. Further, England having become largely dependent once more upon its own resources, exports and imports all but disappear, leaving the path clear for a revival of agriculture and the resumption of its erstwhile organic relationship with industry.

But why only in wartime? The answer is clear. In 1694 the National Debt amounted to £1,200,000. In 1914 it stood at £650,000,000. The current figure is £20,000,000,000. It is

authoritatively estimated that in post-war days the annual interest payment alone will approximate £650,000,000—the amount of the total debt in 1914. It is clear that to pursue the National Debt system in days of peace will be impossible without bringing down the whole crazy edifice—an event to postpone which the powerful interests who still thrive on the carcass will not hesitate to sacrifice more than agriculture.

There can be no doubt as to the action which is essential if English agriculture—and with it English civilization—is to survive. The existing monetary system, which normally dooms the nation to artificial poverty and slavery to the machine, that sacrifices agriculture and with it man's economic, moral, and spiritual heritage on the altar of 'export trade,' is accursed, and must go. Nearly two hundred years ago, Adam Smith declared that no nation could follow the Dutch system of finance and hope to escape disaster. William Cobbett denounced it as the 'curse of England.' Disraeli indicted it as having occasioned 'the degradation of a fettered and burthened multitude . . . as having made debt a national habit . . . credit the ruling power, not the exceptional auxiliary, of all transactions . . . as having entailed a mortgaged aristocracy and a gambling foreign commerce. . . .' To-day new denunciations follow these ancestral voices. One of the latest is that of R. G. Hawtrey. 'The clear conclusion is,' he writes, 'that measures should be adopted for the reduction and ultimate extinction of the Debt.'

Nor can there be any doubt as to the constructive reforms that must follow the 'extinction.' Having regained the sovereign right to create and issue currency, the Government must increase domestic purchasing power on a debt-free basis. It must do so to the extent necessary to establish an equation between production and consumption. Only so can it provide farmer and industrialist alike with the requisite fundamental to economic health—a stable home market. Moreover, only by so doing can the 'City' be denuded of its power to export so-called 'surplus goods' in exchange for 'bonds' for themselves and 'cheap fodder' for the nation, leaving debtor nations no alternative but to undersell the British farmer. Without these fundamental

reforms, this return to first principles, no new measures, whether related to rationalization, marketing and price-fixing schemes, scientific farming, or what not, can be of any real or lasting avail.

Meanwhile, the shadows appear to deepen into night. For notwithstanding the 'handwriting on the wall,' clear as that which startled Belshazzar and his guests, the Government has announced its fixed intention to reimpose the selfsame export policy that twice within the brief space of twenty-five years has brought England to the verge of the pit. But the nation which has saved itself and the world since 1940 has the means of its own regeneration to hand, and a new generation, grown wise in battle, will—it is believed—arise to redeem the folly and blindness of the old.



#### IV. SELF-SUFFICIENCY

By PHILIP MAIRET

THE economic position of the United Kingdom after the Fascist wars is the subject of a copious flow of public discussion, some of it highly perspicuous and well informed; and the policy that our economic leaders are likely to pursue is already becoming discernible. That this policy, considered as an adaptation to the most pressing circumstances, will be ingenious in conception, may be confidently expected. Whether it will be wise, considered as a means to our national and human ends, will depend upon how far it observes certain principles which are almost wholly neglected in the current discussions and speculations—principles which in the present chapter I shall endeavour to apply.

We must not underrate the predicament which our leaders will have to face: it may amount to a challenge as decisive for Britain's future as that which Hitler presented five years ago. This country will be, financially, about as deeply in debt to other countries as they were previously indebted to it. This means that, if the people of the United Kingdom are to follow the same occupations and to earn the same or a rising standard of life, they must at the same time discharge an external debt by an additional flow of industrial exports. But this is likely to be more difficult than it would have been before, when we failed even to meet current imports without drawing upon financial reserves. For after this war new industries will have been established in every continent, enabling our previous customers to do some of the work which Britain previously did for them. The mood of the people at home has also changed. They are no longer willing, in the name of liberty, to allow the industrial, financial, and commercial groups to carry on the enterprises and organizations of the economic life, and to abide by their success or failure. They expect their Government—or so it is said, and there is some evidence for it—to undertake, or at least to

supervise, this work of management, and to assure to every one security in employment and an improving standard of comfort, amenity, and amusement.

How far the demand for this programme is a deep and spontaneous movement of the people is open to question, but the belief that it is so is now a political reality which no Government in the near future will neglect. They will probably foster such a simplified notion of 'what the people want,' for it always seems easier to govern if a concrete task for the whole nation to discharge can be prescribed and accepted as axiomatic. In the name of a sacrosanct and overriding aim, moreover, they can take powers to enforce decisions which would not otherwise be countenanced.

Additional powers will be indeed required, if security 'from the cradle to the grave' is to be assured to a people whose economic system did not secure it for them before, under more propitious circumstances. It will not be possible for citizens to enjoy their former liberties in such matters as the choice and terms of their employment. But if they accepted direction in these things with sufficient docility it is not impossible that such a programme might be fulfilled. For this country is one of the two or three with the most skill and experience in the modern techniques of industry; whose power to produce more elaborate and ingenious artefacts, in ever greater quantity and more cheaply, is a thing to which no limit can be assigned. The production of the maximum quantity, at the cheapest rate, of the newest and best products of technofacture—this is being gently suggested to the pride of Britain as the only possible way to maintain, in the prospective circumstances, Britain's very existence as a world institution and a world power; whilst to the masses it is being gently proposed as the means to a secure protected life from birth to burial. If the people of Britain saw the emergency in the same light as the economists see it—which they do not—would they not decide to save the country and themselves by making such an enthusiastic response as they did in the days of Dunkirk?

Given that response, success, at least for a time, is possible. For all it means is that a certain type of mind and talent which has, until now, been given only a vague and limited dominance

over the people's way of life, should be explicitly invested with the prime authority. Those people among us who love research and technics, who delight in fabrication; those who enjoy the organization of transport and commerce, or the financial accountability of these things—all these have hitherto had the status of more or less free adventurers, and by their industry, enthusiasm, enterprise, at the lowest by their love of power or gain, they have made England the great world power it came to be. They did so partly because the English constitution set them free to do so, while leaving others at liberty to do other things; but though their work prospered so much that, at last, nine-tenths of the nation were directly or indirectly in their employment, they were neither acknowledged to be the nation's real rulers, nor did they represent all of the nation's mind. There are still limitations to their power, their works are still competitive and unco-ordinated. The notion is that we remove these limitations. If all such activities were organized and co-ordinated, if all waste were eliminated, all talent and labour employed to the best advantage—if, in short, the whole country were put under one business management, like one great manufactory and departmental store—then Britain might still, overcoming all disadvantages, be able to regain her position as the world's chief workshop, as the country which employs the overwhelming and still increasing majority of its population in urban and industrial occupations. Her industrial products might still command custom in foreign markets, despite the growing competition, and the proceeds of their sale suffice not only to buy materials of quality and quantity enough to go on with the business, but to assure also the increased imports of both food and luxuries needed to raise the 'standard of life' of all her poorer citizens.

Without questioning its feasibility, however, there are objections to this proposition.

Those who uphold it as the best hope of our nation are thinkers who also hold certain opinions as the nature of world trade and the means by which it should be regulated. World trade, in their opinion, depends for its prosperity and value upon the free interchangeability of the monetary currencies of the different nations. Hitherto this interchangeability of moneys has been



helped by the measurement of each one in terms of the amount of gold that the gold merchants would give for it; and gold is still maintained, though now somewhat artificially, in this position as the world's standard currency. In the plans now being discussed, by representatives of the world's most industrialized nations, for ordering the future of international trade, the primacy of gold is not so much insisted on, but the greatest emphasis is laid upon the free interchangeability of each currency with every other. This view of money is invariably found in association with the exaggeratedly industrial view of England's future.

It is easy to explain the connection. In so far as a free trade in money is allowed to go on, each country's money is a variable function of world currency in general. An English merchant, for example, sells his goods to a foreign customer only if the latter can buy the pounds to pay for them. He buys from an American firm only if he can first buy the necessary dollars. Both he and his foreign counterpart must buy money from the merchants of money before they can make a single transaction. It is therefore the latter who are the arbiters of the world's economy; and their conception of wealth is a purely financial one. They favour the customer, and the country, which can obtain the highest income in terms of world monetary exchange. This means that they favour industrial export: their logical ideal for a country, economically, would be that it should waste no labour or skill upon agriculture; produce no foodstuffs except such as may be too perishable to survive a voyage in good condition—or indeed put up with disadvantages in that respect and produce no food at all, but educate and employ every single citizen to contribute to such a supremacy in technofacture as would command every world market. Then, it might be hoped, other countries would supply all the food and other substances needed to maintain the nation in its unique position, and would do so at such low prices that they would still be under a burden of irrepayable debt for the industrial services they had received.

No patriotic Englishman can have so crazy an ideal for his nation's future; yet such is the goal towards which our natural human aims have been unconsciously distorted by the social

pressures set up in the industrial revolution; it is the *reductio ad absurdum* to which, moreover, we are now being more consciously directed. In view of the habits, mental, social, and occupational, which we as a nation have been forming for several generations, this line of progress is perhaps that of the least resistance. But no one can think seriously whither it is leading without misgiving, for it cannot be in the interest of any people to sever themselves progressively from their biological roots. As an anodyne for such doubts, the prospect is often recommended as if it were part of a large, irresistible movement of humanity towards a better world. This better world is to be kept in a state of peace by means of international laws, enforced by something of the nature of a world police force: hence we need not fear for the weakness in time of war of a nation which cannot feed itself. World trade, also, is to be increasingly free, and every nation will be able to specialize in those products which it can produce most cheaply for others and profitably to itself, neglecting other occupations, the products of which it will be able to obtain more cheaply and plentifully by importing them.

This is, of course, a later version of the nineteenth-century ideal of an ever-increasing economic co-operation between the nations, to be brought about by setting up, as the goal of every industrialist and trader, success in a world competition for the means of world payment. The new version differs from the older one, in recognizing that, beyond a certain point which has now been reached, the nations will have to co-ordinate their manufacturing, trading, and even diplomatic functions; organizing their whole political economy as an integral unit of the world's economic life. But the dominating aim of the integrated economic state will be, as it was previously the aim of each individual trader or corporation, a credit balance in world money. And so long as the economic life is dominated by this aim, every nation whose currency is geared into the world financial system will be obliged to devote more energy to technofacture and less to the arts of husbandry. Their populations will desert the fields and furrows and crowd into the factories and assembly lines, and as this movement becomes world-wide, world scarcity may be expected.

Why, it may be asked, should technofacture command such a financial advantage, under a rule of competition which ought, in theory, to tend to equalize the rewards of skill and labour? The historical explanation is that the primary producers have usually been unable to co-operate to maintain prices, whereas the technical faculties have succeeded, despite their mutual competition, in combining politically to raise their terms. This has perhaps always been an economic problem, though modern communications have greatly intensified it. But there is a deeper reason for the undervaluation of husbandry in relation to technics, and that is a psychological one. Men are disposed to give more for a new technical success than for a correspondingly costly product of culture.

This is partly from the love of novelty, or because it is the fashion, and partly from fear of being surpassed by others. Since the discovery of mineral sources of power has so vastly stimulated the pace of invention, the mere desire to keep up with it, not to be left behind, has gone far to keep the technical arts at a premium. But beyond and determining these motives of emulation there is the subjective susceptibility of every human being to the ideas of an age that has excelled all others in its power to manipulate natural forces and materials.

Technics and husbandry are activities which employ—and develop—two different kinds of psychic and intellectual capacity. In practice they are not, of course, entirely distinct activities, since every gardener uses some tools and every technician takes certain natural processes into account; but each depends upon its own, mainly different, discipline of thought and sensibility. We can illustrate this difference by considering, for example, two men pursuing two very customary hobbies, both without any ulterior motive. The one, let us say, is growing an annual plant in the window box of his attic, the other is building a wireless receiver from parts bought at the shop round the corner. The first man is tending the life of another being which he does not expect at all deeply to understand: indeed, its inexplicable character is, hardly less than the beauty of its flowers, a source of his satisfaction in it. He may give considerable thought to its needs, and to cultivating it to what he thinks the best advantage;

but when it dies, and he removes the remains, he does not feel that he has much to his credit. The amateur technician, on the other hand, completes his task with an unmistakable feeling of self-fulfilment. He has brought something into existence which is, in an exact sense, supernatural—a complex instrument capable of rendering an astonishing service; and though he may comprehend little of the much more difficult labours of others which have made his own modest success possible, he feels he has played a part in that triumphant activity of the human mind which is enabling modern man to transcend the limitations of the given creation, and to produce something different but almost as wonderful.

Of these two subjective attitudes to life and work neither can be said to be more human than the other. The human soul is injured by too exclusive a reliance upon either; and they are only united, brought into balance and harmony, in the work of the artists; which is neither husbandry nor technics, but a culturally higher activity midway between them. A healthy society contains many more who are, in this sense, artists, than of those who are specialists in what we call the fine arts, and because it is healthy such a society can also afford a great deal of specialization in the technical functions without losing its mental balance. But if a society begins to exalt technics into something very like the meaning of life, or the supreme achievement of man, or even the prime necessity for national survival, there is a very great danger that it may get its people to believe these things, for they can be presented in a light that is flattering to human self-esteem. If a nation were to become obsessed by such beliefs, the loss of its skill in husbandry might not be the most immediate disaster; for it would lose its social sense. To ordinary human wisdom and intuition, it is apparent that any successful human community is an achievement of *culture*—that it is brought about by the *art* of government, which is a co-ordination of all the given cultural and natural resources of a community, from the highest religious ideas in their heads down to the soil and the watercourses under their feet. But a people over-enamoured of the technical aspects of living is tempted to believe that social relations need not be cultivated—that they can be fabricated.

Such a people might all too probably think that a human society could be reorganized throughout, according to a prearranged plan. The present talk of a 'planned economy' may often represent legitimate aims, but much of it is tainted by what we may call the *technocratic fallacy*.

As one of our profoundest thinkers has said, the present world crisis is not so much social or political as cultural. The *hubris* engendered by a period of mounting technological triumph has begun to affect the minds and the souls of men, for they are unable to resist the idea that scientific fabrication is the only cultural ideal of the present and the future. The suggestion that it is so is conveyed by almost everything they see or read about, by all the arts of the press and of advertisement, and, at the highest levels, by the steady advance of technical education at the expense of the humanities. Men are almost compelled to believe this cultural fallacy with their brains, but in their souls they, of course, resent it. Unconsciously, they are in revolt, and seek various remedies, from the psychological insurrection which was invading literature and the arts between the wars to the vast political conspiracies which have again terrified the whole world into war. War and revolution are assuming such menacing proportions that fears of the destruction of our modern western civilization are often seriously entertained and are probably justified; for, although prolonged violence and devastation may reduce some of the pride of our culture, they cannot of themselves correct it. There is no way out of this psychic impasse except by the recognition that it is of a psychic nature, and by taking appropriate measures to subordinate man's impulse to fabricate to his capacity to cultivate.

All other ideas will prove illusory. In the various communist schools of thought it is believed that the solution lies in accepting technological progress as the cultural ideal, or at least as the overriding practical necessity of life, which, if fully accepted, will give a certain space and latitude for irrelevant cultural pursuits, which are conceived as palliative or recreational. The assumption is that all will be well if we will only distribute the products of technical progress with social justice. Unfortunately, however, the products do not support life, and an

excessive dependence upon them starves and irritates the soul. Man can no more live upon the devices of his own ingenuity than a dog can be fed upon its own tail. This is partly recognized in the ideology of Nazism and Fascism, movements which comprised some of the neo-vitalist elements of revolutionary thought, and the systems they envisage would seek to balance the unlimited development of technics by means of an agricultural serfdom to provide a nutritive basis. They would eliminate the notion of 'civility' from civilization. Doctrinally, these schools of thought are never far removed from Spengler's conception of 'Man as a beast of prey'; and they regard the utmost development of technics as right and necessary for a society, as the excessive development of teeth and claws is 'right' in the carnivores. But even if a society of men were happy to regard itself in this light, it would founder in violence, either external or internal, or both—as Nazidom is doing at this moment.

Now the western societies are perhaps scarcely less enamoured of the idea of making technics the basis of their future development, but they have not yet committed themselves to a new system of society in order to expedite that development. They realize that the gradual transformation of all human occupations by power-technics will have effects upon social relations, but they would prefer to leave the matter to evolution: the evolutionary process may include a number of adaptive measures initiated by their governments, but they are not prepared to formulate a new, totalitarian pattern in advance. This is partly because some of their citizens realize that technics as we know it is not a sufficient or safe basis for human society—a minority view which is not suppressed. On the whole, responsible opinion in Britain and America seems to be that the problem can be evaded by continually enlarging its international scope. The theory—so far as one can be discerned—is that the nations, or the particular regions, which are most advanced in technical progress should export their products to the less advanced, until the latter become 'like-minded'—and what will happen then is a problem for which the morrow can take thought. It is tempting to think that a problem can be solved by enlarging its



scope—by exporting it—but in a world that is shrinking so rapidly as ours is at present, this is a temptation to be resisted.

One probable effect of this desire to universalize instead of solving the difficulty will be an attempt to suppress national sovereignties in economic matters—to apply disciplinary measures to all states in such affairs as tariffs and subsidies and currency. The attempt is very likely to fail, for the power of nationalism as a political motive seems to be increasing rather than fading away. But even if it were to succeed, technocratic civilization would only move the more rapidly towards disaster. After all, the responsibility of the national State for that portion of the earth's surface which its people inhabit gives it some interest in the protection of its fertility and husbandry. If states were not



permitted to exercise that responsibility, but compelled to subject their nation's economic activity to world demand and supply, agricultural production would either become subject to destructive forcing processes or by preference be abandoned. You do not get the best, or even the next best, out of husbandry, unless the husbandman is wedded to the land—a principle which must ultimately hold good of states and their fertility. Too much whoring after the fertility of other lands will not be good for their own. If it sounds sentimental to say that good husbandry requires love of the land, we may remember that the same holds good of a technical process: it succeeds only if an inventor, organizer, or owner has had at least a temporary passion for it.



There is no external, economic or political, solution of the problem with which this age is confronted. It is a cultural dilemma, resolvable only in the soul of man. In the soul it will be resolved, if not by reason, then by blind passion and destruction. Major Oliver Stewart, a prominent writer upon aeronautics, has lately been writing upon the need of an intensive campaign of propaganda to reconcile the public mind to the proposed vast extensions of aviation after the war: he observes that an invention which has never, to most people's knowledge, ever done anything but harm to them is not likely to be popular unless forcibly popularized. That seems very probable; and it is not only in this field that we may be on the verge of a profound reaction against technics. Tragically enough, it would be all too likely to assume the form of an insurrection against physical science itself. The achievement and promise of science are the glory of our age, as its exploitation is the disgrace; and the horror of the idea of the destruction of science (a social faculty far more fragile than most people know) is that many existing technical applications of science would long continue to produce evils, which would be the less remediable for lack of that progressive insight which only the highest scientific consciousness can attain and verify.

To say that a human problem so far-reaching as this is psychological is to indicate that the means of solution are not one but many. Some are in the responsibility of culture in general, ultimately of philosophic teaching and practical religion; and any adequate discussion of how they should be discharged is as far outside the scope of this essay as beyond the capacity of its writer. But some of the decisive practical and political issues are being raised now, by the prospects of English husbandry in the world after the war, and by the present controversy between the ideals of economic self-sufficiency and of a world made safe for technocratic expansion.

It is our duty to join in discussion of these as public issues, and to do so with the best possible understanding of what is involved. England happens to be the country whose people have the longest and most extensive experience of the effects of exploitative technics, not only in their own country, but in many

other parts of the world for whose development they have a great responsibility. In our attitude to these things there are very significant signs of change. It is already evident that no responsible British statesman will surrender the development of either the home country or the colonies to the uncontrolled pursuit of production for profit, in terms of world exchange values. Enterprise will be increasingly required to adapt itself to conscious national direction, though the aims of that direction are as yet obscure. We need not despair if at first the values which are sought are all too similar to those which were established in the epoch of unlimited industrialism. We are being forced to assume directive authority over the economic life in order to avert disasters, not to achieve ideals, and have hardly begun to realize that the exercise of that authority implies a scale of positive values, still less to discuss what they are.

It is to the establishment of the necessary values that the present writers offer their contribution, pleading for the re-institution of the normal rights of husbandry in this country. This is not only necessary on nationalistic grounds, but is essential to the natural order in which alone man can live according to his spiritual ends. In this matter the decision of England will set an example of planetary importance. We have unleashed forces which are subversive of all natural order. It is perhaps something to discover, as we are doing, that in the social life of man politics are a higher category of thought than economics—that in the long run politics determine economics and not vice versa; but we have yet to realize fully that both are determined by culture; and that it is our culture which has suffered a distortion. In the correction of that distortion one of the first necessities will be the right understanding of agriculture—and especially of our own.

## V. FEEDING OURSELVES

By PHILIP OYLER

### I

MAN's principal material needs are food, clothes, and shelter. Indeed, if he could only believe it, they are the foundations of his welfare and happiness. Under favourable climatic conditions he can even go without clothes, but under no conditions can he dispense with food. Common sense, therefore, indicates that husbandry should be considered his most important occupation, and about seventy per cent of the world's population act on their common sense in this matter. The rest of mankind, believing that they need to possess all manner of things in order to enjoy life, make unto themselves towns and troubles. However, war and the fear of a shortage of food have had the effect of making them realize their dependence on the earth. For the rest, pastures have been turned under by the plough and lawns by the spade and thousands of people have experienced a mental as well as physical delight in eating fresh food that they themselves have grown. Still, food production is only placed fourth by our Ministry of Reconstruction, so it appears that an actual shortage of food will be needed to place it where common sense always places it, viz. as first priority. It is curious that it is acknowledged theoretically that 'an army marches on its stomach,' and yet the world at large is taking so many of the skilled tillers of the soil away from the land that a world shortage of food appears inevitable.

How will Britain fare then? I hold the unpopular opinion that we shall be short of food, unless we grow what we need. I am aware of the contention that Britain could not feed herself, but I disagree with it. Certainly we have not tried for over a century, and many vested interests have opposed and still oppose any attempt to do so. Doubtless we shall be found unprepared for the job, as we were for war, but when the danger is evident, because imminent, something will be done, as well as discussed.

Our forces will be mobilized to produce food, regardless of the cost and the amount of labour needed, but as food takes longer to grow than for decrees to be issued, there will be a lean time before our needs are met.

But necessity is a stern teacher, and any one who has experienced semi-starvation, if only for a short time, is not likely to forget man's primary need. We could avoid this discomfort if we prepared for it in time (which we shall not do), but we shall never avoid it unless we change our outlook, or farming methods, and our diet. We could do so without any machinery or artificial manures.

Having had the pleasure in France as well as in England of being responsible for the organization of self-supporting farming communities, I propose to give a brief outline of the practices I have followed. For, if circumstances compel us in Britain to grow our own food, we shall not accomplish it by our present methods of many machines and few skilled workers. Man can never produce machines so efficient as man (and animals), and the amount of population will necessitate far more intensive cultivation in smaller units and an increase of at least ten million tillers of the soil.

When war and the Germans threatened our very existence, we did not consider whether it would pay us financially to defend ourselves, nor what it would cost us to do so. When the still more serious enemy of starvation threatens, we shall not do so either. We shall be face to face with the hard fact that money is not wealth, but merely a medium of exchange which may be valueless when there are no goods for it to purchase. And we shall have to turn our attention to our true wealth—the land and all that comes from it, grows on it, walks on it—and the articles that man can make from its raw products. Our first aim, therefore, will not be to make farming pay financial dividends, but to make the land more and more fertile by means that have stood the test of many centuries, that is, by far more thorough cultivations, by making more dung, more compost, more green manure, by double-digging in market gardens and subsoiling on farms every now and then—a process that increases yields enormously. We are apt to forget that the principal needs of

the soil—or rather of the beneficial bacteria in the soil—are not nitrogen, phosphates, and potash, but sunshine, air, and water—and humus. And we are apt to forget that creation was not an act that took place at some far distant date, but is a miracle that is going on before our eyes eternally.

Another point of paramount importance is the matter of fertilizers. I shall assume that, when we cannot buy food from abroad, artificial fertilizers will not be obtainable either, and this will compel us to return (as it is already doing) to the use of something much better—the sewage that is being wasted in the sea and elsewhere from most of our towns and the liquid manure that is running to waste down the nearest ditch on the great majority of our farms. This is a criminal neglect of a great source of true wealth, breaking as it does the eternal cycle of death and rebirth, decay and new growth, which the sages of China have recognized and obeyed for thousands of years, thereby avoiding the erosion and deserts that other civilizations (as well as our own) have bequeathed and are bequeathing to posterity. Perhaps we may even come to recognize that the nicest compliment that we can pay to a gardener is to use his closet.

The primary qualification for being a farmer, forester, or gardener is not a technical or even a practical one, and still less a commercial one. Those who look upon the land as a source of money-making will exploit it sooner or later and will fail to cultivate or plant for posterity. It is a real love of the land that is needed first, for where the land is loved, it will be treated with the care and respect that it deserves, and good crops will result automatically, so to speak.

We hear frequently of the desirability of having a high standard of living—and we all agree that this is certainly a good thing. In fact, we imagined that we had one before the war, because we could purchase frozen meat, canned fruit and fish, and dried foods of all sorts from all over the world. But, in spite of that, a royal commission found that about forty per cent of our population were suffering from malnutrition, whatever their incomes. This was due primarily to the fact that our idea of diet could be summed up in one word—bulk. We thought only of our bodies

as receptacles to be filled, regardless of the fact that no amount of 'filling' is a substitute for that which is lacking. And what was lacking was fresh salad or fresh fruit or both—necessities not merely during a few summer months, but every day of the year. As a matter of fact, the height of the standard of living depends upon the amount of variety of fresh foods that a community can produce, and the climate of Britain favours an astounding selection denied alike to hotter and colder countries. A secondary cause of malnutrition was, of course, our failure to recognize cooking as an art. It is idle to grow salads and vegetables, only to find them 'murdered' in the kitchen through ignorance, and through regarding domestic economy as a drudgery (to be cut to the minimum) instead of a daily opportunity of combining thrift and good taste in a service of the highest importance to the community. How many of our cooks realize that constipation is not a human heritage, but evidence of an unbalanced diet? And how many of them realize that the health of the country depends far more on them than on the medical profession?

No one surely would expect to find the way to heaven by study of crime, and it is amazing that any one should expect to find the way of health by a study of disease. Is it not self-evident that disease is the result of disobedience to natural and spiritual laws, and that its cure as well as its prevention is effected by obedience to them? At any rate, many doctors on the Continent have concerned themselves with the laws of health and their application, and the result in Sweden has been to raise the average life of the nation to seventy-two years in this generation, and a correspondingly fine physique.

Linked up with the desirability of using plenty of fresh food, of designing a selection from it that is not constipating and of cooking it properly, is the possession of teeth with which to masticate it. Since it is evident that all our dental clinics, tooth-brushes, and pastes still find us with complete sets of dentures at an early age, let us see what those people who preserve their own teeth do to preserve them. Here again we find it is simply a matter of common sense. Teeth will not be strong unless children have nuts to crack or hard biscuits to bite with them, or

at least something that gives teeth some work to do daily, nor will an unbalanced diet provide them with the necessary ingredients, nor will any amount of tooth-brushing stop their decay. A sharpened quill or match-stick passed between the teeth after each meal is what is necessary, and this operation should not be considered bad manners, any more than is nose-blowing, when that is required.

It must be remembered that, though food is man's basic need, he is not an animal, and growing and eating food is not the purpose of his existence on earth. His birthright is happiness here and hereafter, for that is the desire of every human heart, and he will obtain that only if work, play, religion, science, art, and philosophy are woven inextricably into one and the same thing, the art of living. Every operation from the ploughing of the field to the final result—the home-baked loaf on the table—presents an opportunity to express our sense of beauty in jobs joyfully and conscientiously done, in learning patience, perseverance, and tolerance in difficulties, in acute observation of the ways of nature (so varied and wonderful in different soils and weather), in rendering a service to others as well as ourselves, and in perpetual thanksgiving not only for all the good things of life, but for the miraculous gift of life itself.

## II

There are still many places in the world where the populace regard the earth primarily as the source of their needs and not as a money-making factory, and the general pattern of them is much the same. If we were to adopt such a life in England, and wanted a really good and varied diet, the external picture of a community would, of necessity, involve intensive cultivation (owing to the size of our population) and the elimination of waste. For example, permanent pastures would have to be restricted to a paddock or two round each farmstead—just large enough for live-stock to get exercise and not intended to provide them with their food except for a month or two in the growing spring, for temporary pastures and other green crops grown on arable land give a far greater yield than our best permanent pastures,

which have the further disadvantage of retaining cattle diseases of all sorts in them.<sup>1</sup> Instead of permanent pastures we have to grow cereals, pulses, potatoes, fruit, vegetables, and green-soiling crops for cattle. Specialization is not practised except where very heavy rainfall makes mixed farming impossible, for the main object is to supply all the needs of men and livestock. For the latter's concentrated ration, we have to grind tail wheat, rye, barley, and oats, according to the nature of the soil, as well as either field beans or peas, but no combination of these will give a balanced ration, all being lacking in sufficient quantity of fat. This is obtained by including a small quantity (roughly ten per cent) of crushed linseed for every kind of stock. Linseed is a very hardy plant, and is not at all particular in its needs as regards soil and climate, but should be put in a really clean seed-bed that has been worked down to a fine tilth. Incidentally it is useful to have some in hand at any time for a linseed poultice, and a five per cent addition of it to a wholemeal loaf gives it a most pleasant nutty flavour, and makes bread a more complete food.

In addition to the above familiar crops, maize will ripen in various favoured counties, and can be ground either into meal for stock or into corn-flour for people, while in many places it does well enough to cut green for soiling or silage for stock or to provide green cobs for the table—a delicious vegetable appreciated particularly by Americans and neglected far too much by us.<sup>2</sup> Buckwheat thrives on the poorest of sands and gives better yields than other crops on such soils. Poultry of all kinds appreciate it very much, but here again the Americans must teach us how to use it, as girdle cakes (with honey) when ground into flour—or whole as porridge. It has one drawback. It goes on flowering till frosts stop it, and in consequence it ripens its seeds, unlike those of cereals, unevenly over a long period. It should, therefore, be grown only on the poor light soils, where cereals can only give small yields. By the way, on the poor hot

<sup>1</sup> But that is surely because our permanent pastures have been neglected or maltreated. We have been far too drastic in eliminating them.—EDITOR.

<sup>2</sup> Cobbett was so much in agreement with what Mr. Oyler says about Indian corn that he called it 'Cobbett's Corn.'—EDITOR.



sands the French grow the wonderful asparagus that we import. As this plant is one of the finest diuretics known (but is regarded here as a luxury of the rich), we should grow it in sufficient quantity for every one in a community to have it. When available to all and in reasonable quantity, a common complaint in spring, viz. lumbago, will be far less frequent. Though a native of the seashore, it will grow on all types of soil, so it should be on every one's table when it is in season.

In our climate a quantity of green crops can be grown for stock—such as mixed cereals and tares, temporary grasses and clover, rape, kale of various kinds, cabbage, and mustard (for sheep only or for ploughing in as green manure). But we should make a far greater use of lucerne,<sup>1</sup> for though this is unsuitable for grazing and difficult to make into hay, it can be cut several times a year over a number of years, will resist any drought, for its roots penetrate to a very great depth (I traced them forty feet down in sand, when digging a well), and owing to that penetrating power will break the hard pan that forms at plough depth and has a subsoil effect in consequence. But the finest stock feed of all is totally neglected here. That is Swiss chard or seakale-beet, used to some extent here as a vegetable (and a delightful one too). Sown in rows about twenty inches apart, and roughly thinned by running a harrow across the rows, it can be grazed by any type of stock, and will grow again and again and resist many degrees of frost. Before it goes to seed in its second year (for it is a biennial), it will give a good bite before anything else. Further, when ploughed out, pigs will delight in the roots, which are like those of small sugar beet, which is part of its parentage. Other things in its favour are that it will grow on any soil, though naturally it will thrive best when well done, and in forty years' use I have never known it to have any disease at all.

Some few of us have always made a point of growing all the

<sup>1</sup> The American alfalfa. In the Argentine it is the principal cattle-feed, and is so successful as such that the average yield annually for each cow on many of the estancias is eight hundred gallons, a yield which includes the mother weaning her own calf. No artificials are used on the alfalfa leys.—Editor.

food that our live-stock require. Many have been compelled to do so in wartime, and found it a simple matter, but very few of us indeed in England have (during this century) produced our own food. In fact, before the war one could go into an English farmhouse and often find on the dinner table no food produced on the farm, or even in Britain: white bread (so called) made of American flour, beef from the Argentine or bacon from Denmark, cheese from Canada, butter from New Zealand, and canned fruit from South Africa. But now let us consider a better way. Let us have really good food—good bread, good butter, and good cheese for a start, not the factory products sold under those names. Those who have never tasted home-made bread from home-grown cereals, rich butter and cream and cheese from Guernsey or Jersey cows, have something to live for. They will discover that these with fruits, salads, and vegetables are in themselves a perfect diet—even if they had nothing more. I maintain that the first thing that a prospective housewife should learn is to make bread,<sup>1</sup> for the millers and bakers are not concerned with supplying the public with a good article, but with making as much profit as possible out of the corn that they grind and the bread that they make. Both like a hard, dry grain, the former because it is crushed easily on their steel roller mills and the latter because it will absorb a lot of water. As bread is sold by weight bakers don't like our home-grown cereals because they won't absorb so much water, and the fact that they have far more flavour than imported cereals is of no interest to them.

Let us press, therefore, for the reopening of some of the twenty-six thousand windmills and water-mills that have been allowed to go out of action—or grind our own corn with hand-mills, as some of us do now. And I say 'corn,' for wheat is not the only cereal suitable for bread, and it is doubtful if it is the best. Many combinations can be made of wheat, barley, oats, rye, corn-flour, buckwheat, and any of them can have a *small* addition of linseed, if liked. My personal preference is (for winter use) a loaf containing about seventy per cent of wheat and about thirty per cent of rye. This gives a rich nutty flavour, and the rye helps to keep it in nice condition for a fortnight (if

<sup>1</sup> So did Cobbett.—EDITOR.

required) as well as providing a gentle laxative. In fact, in those countries where it is the chief cereal used, one sees no advertisements of aperients. Rye, by itself, makes a very sticky dough and oats a very 'short' one, but the two combine well, and barley being less heating than wheat can with advantage replace a lot of the latter in warm weather. There are, in fact, a great number of delicious combinations, and there is nothing that the palate appreciates more than a change—in bread as well as in other foods. And to go with our bread let us make really good butter and cheese. The pressed cheeses, it is true, require largish dairies and equipment for their manufacture, but any one who has a cow (or even a goat) can make first-class butter and cream cheeses of various kinds with a little practice and instruction.

We shall experience no difficulty in producing all the salads we need (particularly by using more greenhouses), and all our vegetables, but we shall need a vast increase of fruit of all kinds, and of nuts, which are one of the very best foods. Here again we could copy our continental neighbours (and even go one better) by planting apple, pear, plum, cherry, quince (in damp places), walnuts, chestnuts, almonds, medlars, mulberry, and even standard peach and apricot trees (in favoured spots) along many hundred miles of roads and byways, choosing, of course, the type of trees suitable to our varieties of soils and local conditions. In many odd corners, waste places, orchards, and elsewhere we could plant quantities of currants, gooseberries, raspberries and loganberries, cob-nuts, and filberts, so that there would be abundance for all—and obtained moreover without cultivating another acre. Where there was a glut of plums or some other produce, these should not be allowed to rot on the ground because transport and middlemen's profit would amount to more money than the fruit would fetch. They should be dried (instead of importing foreign prunes) or people should be brought from the towns to eat as much as they liked for a small charge, as fruit-growers allowed—to their profit—fifty years ago—and pigs should be turned in to clear up the residue, as is done in the peach orchards of the U.S.A. to produce the delicacy known as 'peach-fed' bacon.

If, again, as might happen, we had to abandon the heavy breeds of cattle and turn to the smaller kinds giving rich milk, we could make up for the loss of prime beef by making use of the grass of our roadsides—now wasted almost entirely. On this we could keep a prodigious quantity of geese, which will begin grazing as soon as they are hatched, and need no food whatever given to them, unless one wants to make them fat for table, which means some grain feeding for three or four weeks.

Every single house can have its geese, for sleeping quarters only are required, their days being spent on the 'parish meadow.' It is interesting to see these at the gate of every house in a German community in the morning, waiting the arrival of the goose-herds to take them out for the day, and to see them separating on their return in the evening, waiting to be let in their home gate. This service to the community is one for the young or the old, and goose fat is a particularly rich ingredient in cooking.

Along the roadsides, too, goats can be tethered by the thousand. Their advantages are that they can be milked and managed by children (as they are small and have only two teats, they are indeed easier for children than for adults to milk): they are free from tuberculosis. They are fastidious feeders, so that goat-meat (especially young kid) is a delightful food, of which we know very little. Though their milk is different in composition and flavour from that of cows, the taste for it is easily acquired, and one of the world's finest cheeses—made in Touraine—is manufactured from it.

There is another source of food, neglected entirely by us, and that is freshwater fish. There is, of course, the small supply of trout and salmon caught by the sportsman, and a small supply of eels caught on the mill-stages, erected hundreds of years ago. But (as far as I know) no freshwater fish are bred and fed for table, as they used to be by the monks and others in days gone by. But those of us who have tried cleaning out a moat (and keeping it clean), stocking it with carp and feeding them with bread-crumbs from the table and other scraps, would not be believed if we stated the weight of fish that can be produced in a few years. Fish, it should be noted, when fed, will compete for the bait thrown, and can be caught at a minute's notice at

any time. I have known the same fish—a small one—to be so quick on the uptake as to be caught three times (and put back three times) in as many minutes.

Finally, there is the question of drink. We who have been accustomed to tea and coffee (and incidentally tobacco) would miss them very much if supplies were cut off, but we surely cannot deceive ourselves into thinking that any of these is good for our health. The most that we can pretend is that they don't do us much harm, if used in moderation, and children brought up without them do not miss them, and are better without them. What native products can we have instead? In the first place milk, of course, for the youngsters—raw milk from tuberculosis-free cows, which is both food and drink, teas made from camomile, lime flowers, and various beneficial herbs, cordials made from strawberries and other fruits and berries, mead, cider, perry, beer (a food as well as drink, when made as in former days of malt and hops—as different from modern beer as real bread is from the present commercial article), various spirits and liqueurs too (if we chose to make them), and wine from grapes, probably the best drink of all for adults. Of course, every one knows that we can grow many different kinds of dessert grapes under glass without heat, and we could increase the acreage so that they were not merely a rich man's fruit. But few are aware that we can grow several kinds of outdoor grapes which will ripen against southern walls for drying and using instead of imported raisins, and can be grown as espaliers (like continental vineyards) for making into wine.<sup>1</sup> Good wine is not made from dessert grapes any more than good cider is made from dessert apples. As nearly all the old wine-presses in England have disappeared, we should have to make new ones or use travelling cider-presses, such as one sees in western counties—and from the residue we could distil brandy, as the French do. And as a drink for all honey in hot water with or without flavouring is a very pleasant one. Bees, in fact, should be multiplied many times, not merely to pollinate the vast increase of fruit trees, but

<sup>1</sup> A further advantage of outdoor viticulture in England is that the best of all open-air grapes, the muscat, is one of the very hardiest of all fruit trees.—EDITOR.

because honey is so much superior in flavour and health-value to synthetic sugar, no matter whether that is manufactured from beet or cane. And why should we neglect the syrup obtained so easily by tapping from the birch and the Canadian maple, which grows quite readily here?

I maintain, therefore, that we could certainly produce all our own food and drink, if we chose to do so or were compelled to do so. Not only so, but, provided that transport was properly arranged, we could have a far more luxurious and wholesome diet than we have ever had and in sufficient quantity for all.









## VI. FARMING IS THE FEET OF THE NATION

By L. F. EASTERBROOK

FARMING, in peace or war, means national service. For its job is to provide the first and most essential of the services that mankind requires—fresh, health-giving food in adequate supply. That, one would have thought, was fairly obvious, yet it was only the other day I heard a shipowner remark: 'If I had my way, I would pass a law forbidding anything to be consumed in its country of production.' One can understand a shipowner feeling like that, but the incredible thing is that any nation should have been stupid enough to let him, and people like him, have their way. Yet that is what we were doing before the war. 'You mustn't do anything,' we were told, 'to interfere with the balance of trade we obtain through our invisible exports.' These exports had become so invisible that two million of our countrymen were unemployed and millions more were under-nourished while we let our fertile acres run to waste. We know better now, we think. The war has taught us a little of what we owe to the goodness of God in giving us what should be one of the finest agricultural inheritances in the world. But shall we remember?

I am not an 'economist.' But we are far too prone, I think, to hand things over to the experts and take their word for it that they are the only people who can possibly understand the particular subjects in which they have specialized. So let us look broadly at the results of pre-war economic theories about the provision of our food and ask ourselves: Did they deliver the goods with success? The goods came here all right. Two-thirds of all the food we ate were carried in those ships and financed by those bankers and insurance firms that contribute so much to our 'invisible exports.' But, as Sir John Orr has shown, half the population were failing to obtain the food necessary to keep them in good health. And the food in which they were most deficient was the 'protective' foods, as they are called, that is to say the milk and milk products, the fresh

vegetables, fruit, and eggs, and the meat—the very things that our own soil is pre-eminently fitted to produce, and much of which cannot in any case be imported.

But this is only one aspect of the failure of that system. It entailed, among other things, laying waste our own countryside after the last war quite as effectively as if the Germans had won it and brought the usual devastation in their wake. A quarter of a million men fled the land. Farm houses, cottages, and buildings fell down and, like the neglected fields, became buried under the weedy vegetation with which nature covers up the follies of man. Hope fled, and enterprise. One of the greatest fallacies in this world is the belief that bad times compel progress. They do not. Bad times bring hopelessness, lost confidence, apathy—the reverse of all those things which the exponents of the virtues of competition themselves tell us are vital to commercial success. We can see proof of that to-day. For no sooner did the war compel us to pay farmers fair prices, to give them a semblance of stability and therefore of confidence, and to make them feel that they were wanted again and had an important part to play—no sooner did we do this than there was a resurgence of spirit in the countryside, an uprising of endeavour and enterprise that has far exceeded the wildest hopes of the most devoted believer in British agriculture. Moreover, the point about making our food growers feel they were wanted again is, in my opinion, just as important as fair prices. I have seen it at work week after week all through the war, and I live and move among farmers. And how natural it is! For we are human beings first, and producers of this, that, or the other afterwards. There is, as yet, no such thing, thank God, as 'economic man.' An experiment in an American factory may be remembered when someone tried giving the factory workers more light. Production went up. They gave them still more light. Production went up again. Then some bright person suggested giving them less light. For the third time, production went up! The answer was, of course, that the workers, knowing they were the subjects of an experiment, had been made to feel that they were important people.

The consequence of the pre-war economic policy was to

destroy home agriculture in body, soul, and spirit. Had the war come ten years later, the process of destruction would have gone so far that many people believe farming would have been incapable, from every point of view, of making the great effort vital to getting us through the dark days of the war. 'Ah, yes!' our economist friends might say, 'but doesn't that only show that home agriculture cannot really compete with overseas agriculture? You have to take a broad view of such things, see them on a world map. Every country must produce the things it is best fitted to produce.' We will accept that for argument, and look at things on a world basis. What do we see? We see a situation in which wheat has not been grown at a profit in any of the big exporting countries since the year 1928. (They had to give the farmers some sort of a profit in the end to keep them in existence, but this they did, as we did, with State subsidies, after many had gone to the wall.) But the world market price of wheat had been below its production cost from the year 1928 until the war blanked down on statistics. One million farm families in the U.S.A. have needed even more drastic measures to save them from complete extinction, even in some cases from starving to death on their farms. A special department of the Administration, quite apart from that which arranged subsidies for the ordinary farmer, had to be created for this rescue work. In Canada, the debts of the prairie farmers exceeded their assets in 1938. In New Zealand, there had been times when two breeding ewes could be bought for the cost of one pullet. It was the same story elsewhere. And when, in spite of these difficulties, farmers did grow the stuff, what happened to it? Much was sold and consumed. But large quantities were unsalable; it went bad, or was burnt, or was dumped in the sea. Millions went hungry.

Nor was this the end of folly. We perpetrated far greater crimes against the Power that created this fertile world of ours and ordained that the soil should bring forth its increase for the children of men. We raped the earth. Although we could not sell all the food, our greed for money made us exploit that thin envelope of fertility on which mankind depends for its existence. Two-thirds of the whole vast territory of the

United States has been damaged in this way. Some of it is ruined for ever, some only for a thousand years or so, but the greater part of it, thank God, can be put right again within a reasonably short time if we mend our ways. In Canada, they were not so much worried about the future of farming as whether there would be any land left to farm. In South Africa, there are places about whose luxuriant fertility men only forty years ago were writing home, but which to-day are barren deserts. *The Rape of the Earth*, by two scientists, Jacks and Whyte, is an unanswerable document. Then, having robbed the earth by greedy farming of its ability to grow good food for us, we doped it with chemicals, like trying to feed a man suffering from debility on a diet of whiskies-and-soda. When this failed and the soil began producing food susceptible to diseases and pests, we still would not learn. We tried to treat these symptoms of illness—nature's danger signals—with more chemicals, squirting our crops with poison sprays, injecting disease germs into our farm stock, as well as into ourselves, who naturally suffer in health from the faulty food we consume from the soil we have abused. It's not a very pretty picture that nineteenth-century economic theory has created for us, where greed and misery, bankruptcy and exploitation go hand in hand, and artificial thinking has led to an artificial technique that can only end in producing artificial men and women. This it was doing, until war blasted us into reality. The crowning folly of this topsy-turvy adventure in Wonderland was that it was undertaken in the belief that it would lead to world prosperity. Now, seventy per cent of the population of the world are engaged in producing food. Yet we are expected to believe that the interests of commerce are served by destroying their asset—the land—and by reducing them, the customers for manufactured goods, to penury. This one fact alone should surely be sufficient to make us realize what false gods we have been induced to follow, and encourage us to trust a little more to our own common sense and less to the theories of the unwitting specialists in usury.

Not that economists or bankers or discount houses are solely responsible for these errors. But the community as a whole should have some say in directing their energies into the channels

that will bring the greatest good, and that means getting some of them out of the groove in which they have been thinking since the middle of the last century. Nor need it be unprofitable. To give just one example. If we were to carry out a policy for improving our grassland on the lines demonstrated by the most brilliant and one of the most practical of our agricultural scientists, Sir George Stapledon, we could double its capacity for carrying live-stock. Live-stock are the most important branch of our farming. Before the war they and their products represented an output from our farms, in money at wholesale prices, of no less than £180,000,000. So it would be a conservative estimate to say that, by encouraging such development, we could have a market on our own doorstep of at least an extra £100,000,000, even at pre-war values, for those people in the towns with goods to sell to farmers and their men. One hundred million pounds a year of new business, here within our island, and with all the goodwill that goes with it. Where else are we likely to find anything to match that after the war?

Again, it is no small thing when the London Chamber of Commerce urges, as they did in a memorandum of 1942, that 'competition for cheapness should not influence the Government in formulating a sound agricultural policy.' It added that 'Prices which will enable the efficient farmer to pay reasonable wages and secure a fair return for himself must, by one means or another, be assured.' The chamber even went so far as to advocate that, where necessary, supplies of interest-free capital should be made available for remedying the past neglect of our countryside. There spoke the true soul of London, which is something greater than an international centre of money.

But, even if, as the London Chamber suggested, some of the money to re-develop our own country were lent free of interest, it is only because, in the long run, that would be good business. The vast sums of money lent abroad not only have failed to return interest, but, to the tune of thousands of millions of pounds, have resulted in the capital being wholly or partially lost. Invested in our own countryside, in the form of farm houses, cottages, and buildings, of adequate water, electricity, and transport supplies, in the development of stock farms,

crop-growing land, woods and forests, and the whole background against which an energetic life in the countryside can function and supply our needs—invested in such things as that, the capital could never be lost to us in the same sense as in a foreign country. And it means more business. I gave an instance above of how one branch of agriculture could provide an additional market to buy what townsmen have to sell to the extent of something like a hundred million pounds at pre-war values. But that is only one item. If we are to have an agriculture in the future, the countryside needs, at the very least, a quarter of a million new cottage homes; simply to provide modern equipment for our dairying industry to enable it to produce milk under proper conditions requires a capital expenditure, in the opinion of the experts, of something like two hundred million pounds, and the equivalent sum for agriculture as a whole can hardly be less than five hundred million pounds. For we have starved the land of capital, and bled it with death duties for half a century at least.

Again, only one farm in about ten is making use of electrical power, and a new countryside will be a big market for all who are interested in supplying this form of power and its equipment, not only directly to the farms and homes, but to a host of small workshops in the villages, the carpenters, cart-builders, blacksmiths, garages, tractor repair shops, plumbers, builders, and other such enterprises. For their services will be needed, and main electricity is the modern development that will give the village artisan, and the great tradition of skill and service that he has inherited and still possesses, a new lease of life. Then there is the processing that is implicit in the development of our own food supplies, the packing and grading stations and the whole set-up of marketing and salesmanship that will follow the increased output of fruit, vegetables, eggs, etc.—an increased output which not only is our own land better fitted to provide than any other, but which is the keystone of any policy for the better health and feeding of the towns and the nation as a whole. And quite apart from the business side of all this, it is common sense and a moral obligation to develop our own inheritance, provide the good life, and build up the civilization of our own people at least with as much energy as we devote to doing the

same things in countries overseas. There are villages in England where, in a dry time, the cottagers have to walk two miles and more to fetch their water. It must strike them as a little queer, as they trudge back with the buckets, to read, as they have read, of two or three million pounds of British money being spent to provide water supplies in Palestine.

These things can be done. We can live more from our own soil, and will have to do so. But it will mean changes. Changes in our sources of supply, and in the machinery for selling them. Some of those who have specialized in fetching some articles of food from overseas and distributing them in this country in peacetime will not welcome them, and, quite naturally, will try to prevent them. No one enjoys readjustment, especially when it means altering his means of livelihood. We can sympathize with them, and we can do what is possible to ease the readjustment they must face. But the protests they will certainly make must not distract us from our main purpose of providing better life and better food from our own native land.

It will not be possible to go back to the old ways, even if we would. And for these reasons. Firstly, our overseas investments that provided the exchange that enabled us to import our food in its pre-war quantities have largely been liquidated to pay for the war. Secondly, countries to which we formerly exported manufactured goods and received food in return, such as Canada and Australia, have themselves become far bigger manufacturing countries during the war. It will not be easy to get them to take our exports when they can make the things for themselves. Thirdly, countries abroad that sold their surplus food at below production cost have had enough of the pre-war process of beggaring their land to subsidize with cheap food competing manufacturing industries elsewhere. Fourthly, if freedom from want and the Hot Springs Conference mean anything, they mean an end of food surpluses for many a long year to come, if not for ever. For, as it was shown at Hot Springs, if the people of the world are to receive no more than the minimum to keep them in decent health, the world has never yet produced anything like sufficient food.

There remains a word to be said as to why agriculture is

essential to the spiritual life of any community. Mankind is only one part of creation. We are linked, whether we like it or not, with the rest of nature and the universe. If a people try to divorce themselves entirely from the laws of nature and its surroundings, there can be only one end—race suicide. For that people would then have no roots in reality, and so the plant of their civilization will wither and die, and the universe will spew them out. Was not this the fate of the great civilization of Rome when it finally turned its back on the land and looked to slaves to grow its food? Science and industry have given us many good things, but they have created an even greater danger than in Rome of attempting to live entirely artificial lives in Wellsian cities where even the sunshine may be *ersatz*. Agriculture is therefore our life-line, our main link with the rest of creation for the men, women, and children of our nation to remain human beings in the image that God made them. Here true happiness is to be found, and contentment; here the family life can be lived at its best, co-operating with nature and drawing its sustenance from the unfailing wells of her breast. Here we learn common sense and clear thinking, together with individual resourcefulness, and patience and a sense of order. Here, too, we learn skill of hand and eye, the art of observation and quick adaptability, as well as self-reliance and the need to trust in our own judgment. And these priceless qualities are apt to be bestowed upon the whole range of those who live by the land, from the conscientious estate owner and the intelligent large farmer to the yeoman and the peasant, yes, and right through to the humblest farm worker. Is our national character so rich in these things to-day that we can seal up the mainspring from which they come? Is the life of a man or woman, working eight or ten hours a day in a large factory on bits of things of which he never sees the whole, so deeply satisfying that we can turn our backs on almost the one remaining industry where there is no dividing line between life and work? We know it is not.



## PART III

### VII. IS MODERN FARMING UNSOUND?

By C. HOWARD JONES

THERE is a canon in farming, be it modern or primitive, which does not change. By this canon we can judge of the soundness of modern practice—for in so far as we have departed from the canon, to that extent will our farming be unsound. The canon is valid for every activity of man and for every process of nature. Farming is both, and the farming canon is in part natural law and in part the sum of man's experience. It is that which is pragmatically right. We cannot define it, but we can tell by clear thinking when we have got it. The husbandry of the Hunzas has it. Wartime cereal farming, a short term policy, definitely lacks it. Without it farming is not husbandry, but exploitation of the soil. Where there is degeneracy it is absent: that is the supreme test, and it can be applied to land, crops, and live-stock.<sup>1</sup>

The presence or absence of the canon cannot be ascertained by a single examination, for degeneracy involves the time factor. It is, in part, capacity for survival. Moreover, as there are always seasonal ups and downs in farming a very long view needs to be taken. Yet there are many modern practices which are already seen to be radically unsound. For example, the feeding of dairy cows on concentrated, processed foods in order to force from them an abnormal milk-yield; their stomachs demand a large bulk of slowly digested fodder; stimulation of the lactatory glands means their rapid exhaustion and a short life for the cow.<sup>2</sup> Little better is the forcing of live-stock for rapid growth and early maturity, or inbreeding to exaggerate

<sup>1</sup> With acknowledgements to C. H. Douglas, *vide The Fig Tree* for June 1936.

<sup>2</sup> The average life of a milking cow to-day is two and a half lactations.—EDITOR.

or perpetuate desirable characteristics. Such methods, no doubt, give remarkable results in highly skilled hands, but they carry a more than incipient danger for less experienced imitators and threaten the existence of the breed as a whole.

Take, for instance, the large black pig, which during the last war became deservedly popular as a hardy, outdoor breed. About 1920 I saw animals of elephantine size realizing fabulous prices at the sales. Many were the unfortunates who purchased a sow, perhaps parting with a large slice out of their gratuity, expecting to be able to dispose of her progeny at something approaching the prices realized at the established breeder's sale. Needless to say that rarely happened. But worse was to follow. The over-heavy sows, being over-prone to fatness, and having exaggeratedly large lop ears, which not only blocked their vision, but permanently weakened their eyesight, began to rear fewer and fewer pigs. They killed an increasing proportion at birth. The piglets themselves were unnaturally helpless and could not get out of the way of their floundering dam. Eventually the breed became a prey to tuberculosis, with great financial loss to the owners and danger to the health of the public. A comparable state of affairs prevailed in other breeds. The middle white became the perfect fat baby porker. The large white approached the size of a donkey, and sows were able to clear a sheep hurdle at a bound. Both suffered in stamina and in ability to rear good strong healthy piglets. It is only fair to say that this state of affairs has since been largely rectified. Nature stepped in and insisted on a change or the breeds would have come to an untimely end. The inflated prices could not last and only the best breeders were able to survive. Even they were obliged to modify their ideas, and to pay far more attention to stamina and the motherly characteristics of the sows.

Let us be forewarned against a repetition of these happenings of the early twenties. When the time comes to restock Europe, there will be an unprecedented demand for breeding stock of all descriptions. Expansion will have to be as rapid as possible. May our breed societies be strong enough to prevent a short-sighted exploitation of the situation! For such would not only ruin our well-deserved reputation as the stud farm of the world,

but would do incalculable harm to the countries we intend to help.

Essentially, any farming system which can go on for generations without deterioration of the land, or in the quality or the quantity of its yields, and without being dependent upon outside sources for the maintenance of soil fertility, is right and therefore sound. Here I would distinguish between a 'maintenance ration' for the soil, consisting of humus formed from animal and vegetable 'waste,' and an extra 'production ration' of animal manure or artificial fertilizers, or both. But it must be borne in mind that the application of one or two chemical stimulants results in the more rapid exhaustion of other essential substances. Many of these, the so-called trace elements, are present in the soil in minute quantities, and their functions are often unknown, as probably are some of the necessary substances themselves. The only safe way to replace them is by dressings of dung and compost, which are comprehensive soil and plant foods. Increasing use of chemical plant stimulants should be accompanied by increasing use of humus in some form or other. By this means not only is a balanced condition of the plant foods in the soil maintained, but what is far more important, the soil itself is kept in a healthy and living state. Its physical condition is 'right,' air and moisture can penetrate and an ideal medium is provided for the roots of plants. There is a symbiosis of plant roots and innumerable organisms in the soil without which the physical structure and the health of soil and plant collapse. Unfavourable seasons then tell the tale and crop failure follows in their wake.

One of the most important considerations affecting soil health and productivity is the prevailing degree of alkalinity or acidity. The old school of soil-scientists would simply test the degree of acidity of your soil, assessing its 'pH' value, and prescribe so many hundredweights or tons of lime per acre. But it is now known that soil acidity is at least as much affected by cultivation, proper aeration, and general physical condition.<sup>1</sup> For this reason the application of humus helps to maintain that desirable neutral

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* the paper read by Mr. F. A. Secrett before the Institute of Agricultural Engineers in March 1944.

condition of the soil in which the great majority of plants are most at home. Soil acidity is increased by a wet winter, which beats down the particles and hinders the percolation of air, thus restricting the activity of the desirable and vital soil protozoa. Mechanical cultivation at the right time can help to make up for the absence of the pulverizing and lifting effect of frost on the land, but given at the wrong time or in the wrong way, with the object of forcing the soil to yield to the farmer's wishes, can make matters worse than ever. There are definite principles governing successful cultivations.

Perhaps the most vital attribute of any farming system is balance. It is precisely for balance that British farming has long been noted. Our climate, our farms, with their small fields and plentiful shelter, and the inclinations and abilities of our people are all conducive to stock-rearing. That is the first step towards obeying the rule of return, with the maintenance or improvement of soil fertility. Jethro Tull, 'Turnip' Townshend, and others established the basis of modern crop rotation, so fundamental to good husbandry and so sadly, though often unwillingly, neglected to-day. So a traditional system of farming was evolved, a system which suited our conditions and appealed to the sense of 'rightness' amongst our folk, a system which, if followed conscientiously, could be relied upon for long-term results, and to provide more than enough food for the cultivators, their dependents, and their beasts. Traditional farming practice is almost sure to be sound or it would not have survived.

But traditions are not perpetuated in the land itself, nor in books or advisory centres. They are handed down from man to man until they become innate and almost instinctive in the true farmer. The question of the soundness of modern farming is wrapped up with the soundness of modern farmers. Fortunately there is still a strong instinctive feeling for the land amongst the majority of our farmers despite the great pressure exerted by financial dictatorship and bureaucratic pressure, by the urge to make money profits, and by the necessity to meet the insistent demands of the tax collector. The disastrous effect of lack of tradition has been only too evident in the 'newer' lands overseas, where farming was a means 'to get rich quick,' and

where no consideration was given to the past or to the future. Man came, cleared the primeval growth, ploughed, sowed, reaped, and moved on, leaving behind it mattered not what.

The response of British agriculture to the nation's cry, in its hour of peril, for food, food, and still more food, is proof that British farmers have not lost their traditional skill, but are capable of carrying out any policy for the land. The great increase in food production is not, however, proof of the soundness of our pre-war or wartime farming systems. Farmers rubbed along when they and their produce were despised, contriving to keep their land for the most part in surprisingly good heart. When the call came they altered their practice so as to turn the stored-up fertility in their land to account, and they did so without recrimination or any attempt to drive a hard bargain while they had the nation at their mercy. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the fertility of certain farms on good land and under skilled management has definitely increased during the war, while output is going up annually. This is the result very largely of deep and thorough cultivation of the soil. In an unusually favourable year, such as 1943, almost any farmer could show good crops, but the exceedingly dry spring and early summer of 1944 has searched out the bad and indifferent farmer.

Professor Formston, of the Royal Veterinary College, lecturing in 1944 to a National Farmers' Union branch, emphasized the great importance of the proper early treatment of calves, especially of leaving them on the cow until they had got a really good start in life. He held that the artificial rearing of calves was one of the chief contributory factors in the unsatisfactory health of most dairy herds, another being lack of attention to pastures. This exemplifies an approach to 'unhealth' in farm animals on the part of a scientist who is also a realist and a practical farmer which is encouraging. Professor Formston considers it to be the job of the veterinary profession to be able to advise farmers how to rear and keep their animals in health. It should not be primarily to cure disease, which would be very largely eliminated by right management of soil, pasture, and stock.

The poultry situation is very similar to that of our dairy herds.

Before the present war, when 'intensive' and specialist poultry keeping had passed its peak, disease threatened to swamp the industry. In 1941 Mr. J. Worthington, Instructor in Dairy and Poultry Husbandry to the Middlesex County Council, could write: 'Large-scale methods have been made a fetish, labour-saving an ideal. Production has been boosted to the detriment of reproduction.' Mr. Worthington has proved that the solution does not lie with the pathologist; that disease is almost entirely due to mismanagement. He has demonstrated that by natural methods of hatching and rearing, coupled with rigid selection for health and physique, a thoroughly healthy flock can be maintained. He finds that these conditions prevail on many of the smaller establishments where traditional methods are followed. Specialist poultry keeping is a comparatively modern development, the traditional system being the farmyard flock. Then all breeding stock were on free range, and had access to natural foods and grits, with weather-sweetened ground on which to feed. We cannot ignore these sound rules of poultry husbandry with impunity.

For farm crops, what is the traditional basis of good husbandry? I should say that the most important factor is the rotation of crops. Different crops consume or contribute different elements in the soil. Seed-producing crops generally use up phosphates, straw crops deplete the land of potash, leguminous crops enrich it in nitrogen, but require available lime for the process. Deep-rooted crops and grasses add potash to the surface soil by drawing it up from deeper levels through their roots. Then there is the possibility, which must not be overlooked, of residues of a crop being positively harmful to a succeeding similar crop, though harmless or actually beneficial to a different kind of plant. I have no doubt in my own mind that land does get 'strawberry sick,' for instance, although this has not been scientifically explained. Not only do the health of the plant and the yield go down if strawberries are grown too long on the same land, but the fruit lacks freshness and lustre. In neglecting rotation of crops we depart from the canon, as we are finding to our cost.

The principal cause for unthrifty stock and crops is monoculture—a flagrant defiance of natural law. Monoculture,







where carried to the extreme in the corn belts of Canada and the U.S.A., has destroyed the very soil itself, and left a barren and shifting waste. Monoculture under our own favourable climate results in 'unhealth' in crops, lower yields, and increased susceptibility to unfavourable climatic and soil conditions. Monoculture in live-stock means, as in poultry, loss in vigour and increase in disease; it means damage to pasture through excessive or unequal grazing. The only way to build up or maintain a first-class pasture is by mixed grazing, so that all types of herbage and all parts of the field are equally fed down. Therein lies a large part of the art of pasture management. There is some danger that it may be lost under the fashionable system of temporary leys.

Another aspect of natural law is the Rule of Return. This is flouted absolutely by the burning of the straw behind the combine harvester, by which the potash alone in the straw gets back to the land. All traditional systems of husbandry bound the husbandman to practise the Rule of Return. It was contrary to all tenancy agreements to sell straw off the farm—and burning it would have been deemed an unpardonable crime. The modern cowshed, with its concrete gullies and frequent washings-out with the hose, may be necessary to keep incipient disease in check, but it means a shocking waste of vital dung and urine. When the cow stall was kept heavily littered with straw all this was saved, and proper management of the manure meant the return of a large proportion of it to the land. In this way, too, some little known but probably vital substances, including animal hormones, were kept within the life-cycle of soil-crop-animal, whereas now there is a constant drain on the rarer elements affecting soil fertility and their destruction or dumping into the sea.

What of market gardening? There is much the same story to tell. In the days of horse-drawn transport fruit and vegetable growing was mainly concentrated near the large centres of population. Produce was carted to market, and the return load often consisted of rich stable manure,<sup>1</sup> which was produced in vast quantities in city stables. In this way nature's Rule of

<sup>1</sup> Also of night-soil, as is not generally known.—EDITOR.

Return was partially carried out, though it is true that farm land in some places was drained to feed the market gardens. Referring to those days, Mr. F. A. Secrett, the leading market gardener in England, recently wrote in the *Journal of Applied Biology*: 'In the past most crops were healthy, but with the change in the condition of the soil disease and insect pests became more prevalent year by year and the use of dry and wet sprays became general throughout the industry.' This state of affairs was greatly aggravated by financial pressure. Labour became relatively dearer than other costs of production. Artificial fertilizers became cheaper and more plentiful as the chemical combines increased their power and their advertising. Armament firms found in agriculture a profitable dumping ground for their peacetime output of nitrogen compounds and basic slag. Scientists and 'expert' advisers, mostly with the 'N-P-K' mentality of the laboratory bench agriculturist, departing from Sir E. J. (then Dr.) Russell's sound foundation, largely ignored the real basis of soil fertility, and advocated the mineral feeding, or rather stimulation, of crops. This advice was readily taken by hard-pressed farmers, and for a time, until the soil became depleted of humus, it was followed with comparative impunity. Market gardeners, making very heavy calls upon their land in the production of several crops a year, and generally keeping no live-stock, were the first to feel the ill effects of this policy. Many of them have been pioneers in a return to husbandry by going in for pigs or yarded cattle, and by adopting systematic composting of vegetable and animal wastes. Now at last another vast source of wasted fertility is being tapped. In Hampshire large-scale and successful trials have been carried out in the composting of sewage sludge with straw. A very useful compost is made and the local authority acquires a source of revenue in place of a heavy liability. Farmers bring their straw and take away ripe compost. Little labour is required and a very big step is taken in complying with the Rule of Return.

Unfortunately the many encouraging features of the agricultural situation serve but to emphasize the dominating influence of political and financial conditions. The present century has seen a consistent drive for a world totalitarian

system, of which the vast wartime extension of bureaucratic control is a part. Centralization has become the policy and monopoly the objective. Farming, being a way of life, is offering an encouraging degree of resistance to these dehumanizing influences. But constantly increasing taxation and other State-imposed burdens, above all the deliberate blow of vindictive death duties on agricultural properties, have forced greater and greater consideration to be given to the financial or book-figure side of farming. This has had several evil consequences. It has given a very dangerous bias to all cropping and farm-management questions. It has led to the gradual replacement of the most traditionally minded by 'business' farmers, who give cash crops a place of too great importance in their planning, and who cut out many sound but not obviously lucrative customs.

Under this finance-dictated farm policy, with capital drained more and more by taxation and replaced by bank overdraft at high rates of interest, the great urge is to increase financial turnover and to reduce 'overhead' charges. Capital invested has to be kept at the lowest possible level. This was the main cause of the disastrous trend to fantastically high milk yields, egg records, and rate of growth in pigs and other live-stock. It encouraged the reduction of rest periods between lactations and gestations to below the safety limit. It meant the crowding of poultry into small and often unsuitable sheds and buildings. It meant giving the stockman too many animals to tend, with consequent decrease in his efficiency, increasing tiredness, and loss of interest.

Yet on balance the prospect is encouraging. The signpost of this book expresses a faith. 'Return to Husbandry' is the faith as well as the objective of all contributors. Each detects some indication, great or small, of such a return. Each is determined to do his best to accelerate the process, to remove obstacles, and to restore the traditional sense of responsibility for the soil.

On what grounds is that faith based? First and foremost is the proof we have had during the war that farmers have not lost their traditional skill and knowledge of good husbandry. Assured of the need and of a market for their produce, they have risen to

the occasion and doubled their output. Many agencies have been at work during the war to raise the standard of farming. Many farmers believe that only a thoroughly competent agriculture can lay claim to full recognition, and they are long-sighted enough not to fear competition from their neighbours, but to invite their co-operation in increasing the production of food. The Growmore Clubs, started in Hampshire by Captain L. R. Bomford, have stimulated the pooling of experience and have introduced a healthy element of competition. By standardizing crop recording they have enabled their members to compare their own yields with those of the best farmers in the district, often with very beneficial or unexpected results. Advisory services and staffs have been increased, and technical information made more readily available to the farmer. Machinery pools, both co-operative and those of the War Committees, have helped the smaller and less well equipped cultivator. But above all a market at remunerative prices has been assured so that every farmer has been encouraged, in his own and the nation's interest, to increase his output.

Another encouraging feature is the coming closer together of scientist and practising farmer.<sup>1</sup> The agricultural scientist is turning his attention more and more to the study of soil fertility, the basis of all husbandry. He more readily admits that crop production is a biological art, not a chemical problem. The biological sciences are coming into their own, and natural law is once again being recognized as paramount in all farming practice. The chief need is for the removal of all unreal restrictions, in particular financial restrictions, upon production and consumption. The chief danger is the terms upon which agriculture is to be allowed to prosper, for those terms threaten to destroy what remains of individual responsibility for the national heritage. But farming is sound at heart, and through a return to husbandry may yet be the means of a national return to a 'right' economy.

<sup>1</sup> But the writer too easily assumes that such co-ordination cannot be other than beneficial to husbandry.—EDITOR.

## PART IV

### VIII. MECHANIZATION AND THE LAND

By J. E. HOSKING

THE agricultural machine is an elaboration of the tool. It would be a calamity if the skill that was once applied to the handling of the tool were transposed from that worthy aim to the mechanician for the construction and operation of machines. These become so absorbing in themselves that the purpose for which they were originally designed is neglected. The simple spade, between the gardener and his soil, does not absorb anything of the gardener's attention from his main purpose. There is, between the driver of the tractor-drawn multi-furrowed plough, or other implements, and the soil, a mass of distracting complications. He is out of contact with the soil from his driver's seat, and much of his attention must be devoted to understanding and operating the intricate mechanism. The machine must demand his first attention and the less apparent needs of the soil must fall to second place in importance.

In this process of development from spade work to the power plough, there is an intermediate stage, that of the animal-drawn plough, where the ploughman follows his team on foot and guides the implement by hand. One of the best cultivators I know always does his ploughing with a tractor-drawn plough with a ploughman holding the handles and following the plough. There is little doubt that the quality of soil-cultivation deteriorates in general through these stages from the spade cultivation to the 'power'-drawn plough. The advent of power-farming was coincident with a decline in good husbandry, and any deterioration in the quality of work was not, therefore, so noticeable; in fact, the advantages of the power-unit in cheapening production during these years of agricultural depression overshadowed every other factor. In this period the engineer-farmer appeared to be more successful than those whose first devotion was to the land.

It is already apparent that the engineer-farmer's superiority is transient when compared with the farmer, or the farmer-engineer, of equal intelligence. The true landsman will always regard the tractor as an alien to the land. He accepts it under pressure of economic and labour circumstances beyond his control. He knows too that it is efficient only in the sense that alien standards of efficiency are applied to agriculture. Its chief claim to efficiency must be its capacity to cheapen production by displacement of labour. By other standards, those of mechanics, for example, it must be classed as inefficient. On broad agricultural standards it cannot compare with the horse. The horse grows out of the land, is maintained by the land, and returns one hundred per cent to the land in power and in its food residues. Everything of the tractor and for the use of it is imported to the farm, and no residues are returned to the land; its one contribution is power. But if it is 'efficient' to have fewer and fewer men working on the land, and to import fuel to provide food from the soil, then the tractor and power-unit on the farm accomplish that end.

The war has enforced the cultivation of very large areas of land to provide food for the people of these islands. This great task could not have been accomplished but for the power-machine in the circumstances that required all available men for duty in other national services. But I am not concerned here with wartime emergencies, nor am I concerned with farming policies that adopt 'smash and grab' measures to satisfy the immediate needs of banking accounts. I am thinking more of 'efficiency' in terms of the whole rural structure—the land, plants, animals, people—their interdependence and close association. In the war emergency, large areas indifferently cultivated are better than no cultivation at all, and large acreages with light crops are better than no crops. Because of this temporary necessity there is the danger that large-scale power-farming may be awarded credit that it will not merit when quality is again preferred to quantity. There is, too, the danger that the good husbandman may become secondary to the good engineer. Already there are too many farms where this is the accepted order, and machine-power and man-power are alike

expressed in terms of horse-power. The average man is said to develop one-eighth horse-power, costing ten shillings per horse-power hour, and calculations are published to express his work in amount and cost, in terms of electrical units. Man is being compared to the machine, with the machine recognized as the more efficient.

If there were no other qualities of man's labour than are included in such an arithmetical calculation, then man is no more than a machine on the land. But if he were no more than this, there could be no use for other machines. For there would not be any one with the powers necessary to control them, nor would there, indeed, be any machines at all without those faculties that enable a complicated machine to be conceived and constructed. Although there is not the slightest risk of mistaking man for a machine, there is the risk that we may develop the serious fault of applying machine standards to man. It has been said that cheap food and high agricultural wages can only be reconciled by extending mechanization to increase greatly the output per man. Mechanical mass production does certainly increase the output per man by displacing more and more men. The more elaborate machines, the fewer men on the land. But that is 'efficiency' not born of country values. The land of this country, and in fact of every country, cries out for more of the living on the land—more men, more animals, and increased output per acre in quality—food rather than output per man in tons, or acres per man in time.

The depopulation of the countryside has gone so far that the extensive mechanization of our agriculture is an expedient that must be accepted on the road back to repopulation on a large scale. But in these circumstances it must be an expedient only. Many operations on the farm afford scope for judicious mechanization. But it must be our concern that the right use shall be made of the machine, in the interest of the people and the land. The fact that to-day there are many more men employed on some farms directly following large-scale mechanization is an argument in favour of the machine as a temporary expedient towards repopulation. But it can only be temporary, for it cannot be argued that the machine reduces man-power and

increases it at the same time. Only if it were possible to create more acres by machine could it be said that reduction of manpower per farm on the one hand, and an increase in the total employed on the other, are compatible.

The greater the concentration of machines, the greater must be the dilution of men on the farms, and with this a lesser degree of tactual contact with the soil and the life on it. The need of hand-labour is most marked when such selective work as weeding and root singling have to be accomplished, and the effects of labour shortage for this work, and similar work, are cumulatively very costly. Mechanical spraying against weeds may be a substitute but it is no more a complete substitute than synthetic saccharine is for sugar.

There are large acreages of crops where spraying to control weeds reduces the crop more than the weeds would do if left unsprayed. In dry seasons, the retarding effect on the crop is apparent to the casual or untrained observer, though it may be less noticeable in wetter years.

In the past, and not so distant, root and similar crops were regarded as essential in the rotation to provide winter food for live-stock, while the cultivations for these roots served another, and perhaps greater purpose, in the eradication of weeds.

Shortage of hand labour for the farmyard manuring and cultivation of this crop, both of which are so beneficial to the succeeding crops, has encouraged the hunt for substitutes. Imported foods, imported fertilizers, and imported chemical weed-sprays were, and are, mainly the chosen substitutes.

Perhaps time and labour are saved by this substitution in practice, but much more may be the loss. Mechanization does reduce the labour requirements, but it has not yet succeeded in producing root crops and clean land that would satisfy the good husbandmen of the past, nor those of the present. Valuable operations are neglected on many farms to-day, and excused for the reason that there is no time. But they are, in fact, impossible—if there were time—through shortage of skilled hand labour.

There is no doubt that quality in husbandry suffers to the extent that man's sensuous contact with the earth is diminished, and for proof of this we have the wide qualitative difference



between the good hand-cultivated garden and the power-cultivated fields. At the present time, mechanical development can provide a way back to good farming and the perfection of husbandry. But in these special circumstances mechanization must only be the means and not the end. I believe that it is possible, by the right use of machinery in agriculture and emphasis on the quality of work performed, to create a dislike of machines *qua* machines, and instead engender pride of skill in the work and a sense of release from the particular drudgery imposed by the machine.

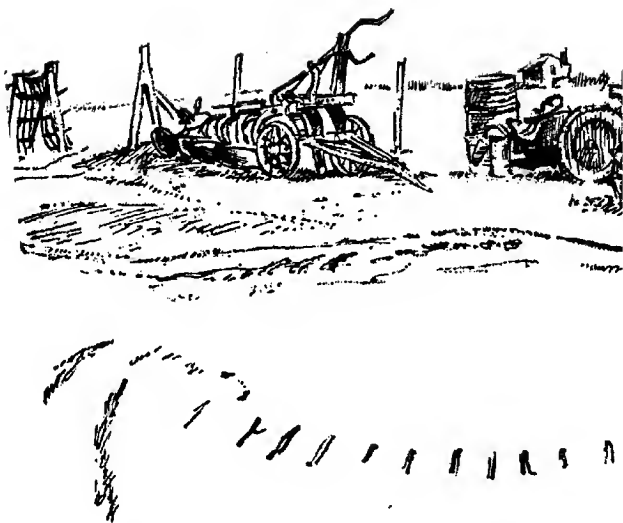
I can claim to be among the first few to use and drive a tractor in this country. I have experienced the particular thrill and pleasure of turning four furrows at a time—in place of the one furrow with horses—and know also what it is to command power by the touch of a tiny lever on the engine. I have experienced the particular pleasure of riding a combine harvester, and seeing many difficult jobs accomplished in the one operation. I know, too, the excitements that the young experience on a tractor, or any other motor-propelled vehicle. I know, again, the pleasure of working with a good horse team and have felt, through the plough handles, the furrow-slice sinuously glide over the burnished mould-board, and from this sense of touch alone can judge the texture of the land. Were there no other sensations, this one alone would be valuable to the good husbandman. But the practised teamster on foot uses his eyes and his nose too with a refinement to which the machine-rider is insensible. His eyes see and record to the trained mind what cultivations are necessary in the future to render more fertile the soil that passes under his feet. The grub and the worm do not escape his notice, and these are not insignificant, the one foreshadowing failure or partial failure of the crop, and the other some degree of soil fertility.

Only those who have experienced the smell of newly turned fertile earth can appreciate fully how much this conveys to the true husbandman. The richness and meaning of this cannot be absorbed to the full except by following a team, where the instincts of the team and teamsman are alike sensitive to the soil. Few remain for whom these things have value in this

power age, where finely cultivated sensibility to nature is scarcely known. Where it exists at all, it is lightly cast aside as of no practical importance, and relegated to the romantic and the eccentric.

There is no room for the cultivator who has developed the art of synchronizing the right tool or implement with weather conditions to coax the soil into the perfect seed-bed, where the power-machine is available to pulverize the good earth by sheer mechanical horse-power. If output per man is to be the standard of efficiency, then the force of mechanical power will win, at least for a time, without the highly developed art of the good cultivator. But if output per acre in quality and quantity is to be the standard, and this is the only standard for a healthy and permanent agriculture, the art of cultivation cannot be ignored. Mere power will never be a substitute for this art. The popular shields against the force of this and similar great truths are the shields of statistics and orthodox balance sheets of the industrial or urban pattern. It is safer to put one's trust in the instincts of the husbandman. If this art and agricultural science could be harmoniously married, there would be some hope of virile offspring sensitive to nature's symmetry. There is no sign of courtship yet, and it may be that the two are for ever incompatible. What figures can express, for example, the potentialities of a seed or of the soil? Mathematical calculations are alien to agriculture, although they are invading her to-day, in company with other foreign intruders, in quantity so great as to obscure their incongruity. In spite of the distortions in the meaning of power-farming, and of all the calculations on horse-power and draw-bar pull, there is no way of applying power more skilfully to the soil per square inch than by hand.

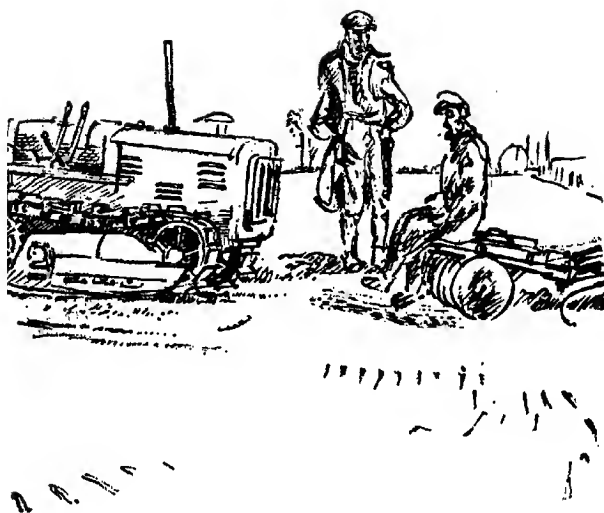
There seems to be a close relationship between the quality of enjoyment in work and the quality of the work done. I have greatly enjoyed ploughing and cultivating by tractor, but this pleasure was never as great as I have experienced in doing similar work with horses. The horse responds to the voice of the driver, and is sensitive to the movement of the implement he draws; he reacts to land out of condition, unaerated sour soil, and to the wrong setting of the implement he hauls. He is part of the



farm, he grew out of it, lives from it, contributes all his life to it, and finally returns into that land.

It is impossible to avoid a comparison between the horse, the indigenous integral part of the farm, and the exotic tractor. The tractor is made in a factory and maintained by a factory; it contributes power to the land solely from imported fuel, and finally as scrap is not received into the earth. The mechanized farm is commonly seen as a graveyard of old machines but without the grave!

The power-machine encourages a form of laziness, as distinct from leisure; it is a form of indifference, not so much an indifference to the machine, as to the land. Acres per hour or per day are often covered and much energy is expended without effective soil-cultivation. This radical inefficiency is escaping



due notice just now, while the accepted new basis of efficiency of 'output per man' is the measure that commands popular attention. When the chase after things newer, faster, bigger, cheaper, in the name of progress, slows down with the awakening to a truer sense of values, then will come the revelation that progress of this order is incapable of interpretation in the realm regulated by natural law.

Farmers in general incur frequent criticism because of their indifference towards the maintenance of the machines they use. It is said that advances in agricultural machinery have outstripped the farmer's present capacity to operate them with full efficiency. But this must always be so if the farmer is to remain a husbandman; for the laws of nature and the laws of mechanics scarcely meet at any point. There are many mixtures of the two in

practice to-day, but few are the blends! No man could be attuned in equal degree to his animals and his tractors, although there are many farmers with good knowledge of both.

It is right that all our acres should be farmed, even indifferently farmed, to the maximum with all the available man power, supplemented by full and right use of machines, until more and more men return to develop their skill in agriculture and raise the standards of quality again. Do we not accept many things as being satisfactory or good enough because the faculty to appreciate greater qualities is undeveloped? I am reminded of a recent example of this. A farmer was watching, with much interest and pleasure, a machine pulling and spreading in swaths his flax crop. He made the remark to me that that was the first machine he had seen doing the job better than it could be done by hand. His judgment was good, but not wide enough in that subject, for he had no experience of good hand-pulling work and little experience of the flax crop. To-day he is richer in experience of both these, and has no doubt that skilful hand-work surpasses in quality the good work done by the machine.

Good machine-milking is preferable to bad hand-milking, but there are few, if any, competent authorities who would proclaim machine-milking superior to skilled hand-milking. The skilled craftsman who takes pleasure in his hedge-layering craft could never erect with any pleasure a fence of barbed wire. On the other hand, there are those to whom the art and pleasure of hedge-layering are unknown. These could find some superficial pleasure in the erection of the barbed fence, although the qualities in the two forms of pleasure would differ as widely as the two fences.

Where the machine has taken us at speed too far along the wrong road, it may be wise, and perhaps essential, to resort to the machine to take us back again to the cross-roads from where we took the wrong turning. For to travel in the right direction is progress even if it be at a slower pace. Speeding in the wrong direction is not progress but suicide. Power-machines in agriculture are enabling a return to the cross roads converging from many directions at the present time, and I hope that the

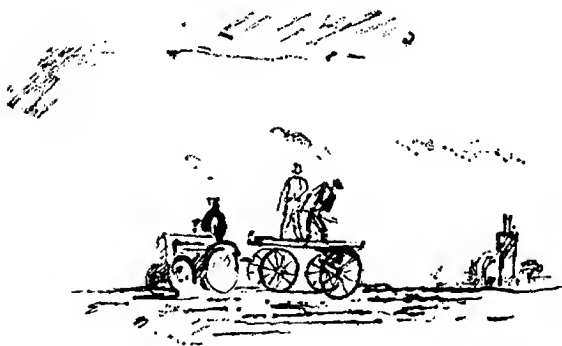
sign-posts will be clearly seen and their direction followed. There is, perhaps, none clearer than in the poultry world. The mechanized egg was being driven at speed to disaster until a halt was called by the restrictions imposed by war on food, and the hen is now a hen again, not an egg machine. Her proper place is on the mixed farm with free range if her health is to be maintained, and the quality of the egg as a health food for the people. This does not preclude the keeping of chickens in the cottage garden and similar places, but it ensures that the main breeding flocks will maintain their stamina, and the quality in the bulk of the eggs that are marketed.

Live-stock must cover the land in numbers as large as possible, for the sake of their health, the health of the land, and ultimately of the people. To achieve this a compromise with mechanization may be necessary in the absence of good fences, hurdles, hurdle-makers, horses, and carts, until such time as needs command, and experience teaches, other methods more suitable. The good stockman and lover of the fields will not long tolerate the barbed-wire or electric fence, unless they serve his purpose better than other means known and available to him.

If the future criteria of agricultural efficiency are to be cheapness and output per man; if first principles and natural laws are to be ignored as they must be to capture this variety of efficiency; if the power-machine is to be the principal means to this end, then it will need no uncommon powers of perception to forecast the disastrous result. The slogan for this would be 'more and more, cheaper and cheaper, by fewer and fewer.' It is to the discredit of the power-machine that such evils are made possible by its misuse. Even at this early stage of development some charges for misuse may be justly made against the machine, and I say this with some restraint as one responsible for the introduction of two power-machines in common use to-day.

Straw, the valuable asset on farms with live-stock, is a burdensome nuisance on the stockless machine-farm. On a true basis of agricultural economy, the power-machine is as inefficient by standards fitting the horse as the horse is said to be by standards fitting the machine. Whichever course is chosen for our agriculture in the future, it is imperative that our eyes shall be

directed always to the main goal. That which is in the best interest of the land and those serving it is also in the best interest of the nation. Machinery judiciously used can serve this great purpose, but it must serve, and not dominate, or skilled will be converted into unskilled labour and good husbandry—the national asset—will be eclipsed.



## IX. HEALTH AND FERTILITY

By LORD NORTHBOURNE

UNDER natural conditions, as opposed to conditions predominantly influenced by man, fertility tends to accumulate in the soil, up to a limit which is set in every place by many factors. These include climate, exposure, and the qualities of the mineral constituents of the soil. Under conditions predominantly influenced by man, though the natural fertility of the soil may be maintained, and even increased, more frequently it is progressively reduced, sometimes up to a point at which no fertility remains, and desert replaces once fertile land. This kind of progressive exhaustion of fertility has become so well known a feature of the modern world, and, under the name of soil erosion, a source of such anxiety in every continent, that its extent and significance need have no further emphasis.

It is obvious that the continued existence of all living creatures, man included, depends on that state of the soil which we know as fertility. Thus the preservation of fertility has an importance which justifies that much-abused word, vital, to describe it. Survival, and certainly more than mere survival, depend on it. For all animals are directly or indirectly dependent on green plants for their food. The adverse effect of a deterioration of soil fertility on the growth and health of green plants is a commonplace of experience. It would be strange indeed if the creatures dependent on those plants were not similarly affected by changes in soil fertility; and affected, as are the plants, not only in numbers, but in health and vigour, not only in quantity but in quality. Thus there is a very strong *a priori* probability that all questions relating to vigour and health, and not only the question of mere survival, come back in the end to the soil. In other words, if the fundamental nutritional relationships of which the soil is the basis are ignored, those questions can never be fully answered. A good deal of evidence pointing to some conclusion of this kind exists, some of which will be referred to later.



Let us therefore try to compare the various conditions under which fertility is gained or lost. For convenience we can divide them into three sets of conditions or states. The first is that called 'natural,' in which fertility is accumulated. The second and third are dominated by human influences: but in the second case fertility is maintained or increased, whereas in the third it is used up. These three states merge one into another without rigid divisions between them. But it is easy to choose sufficiently characteristic and unmixed examples of each.

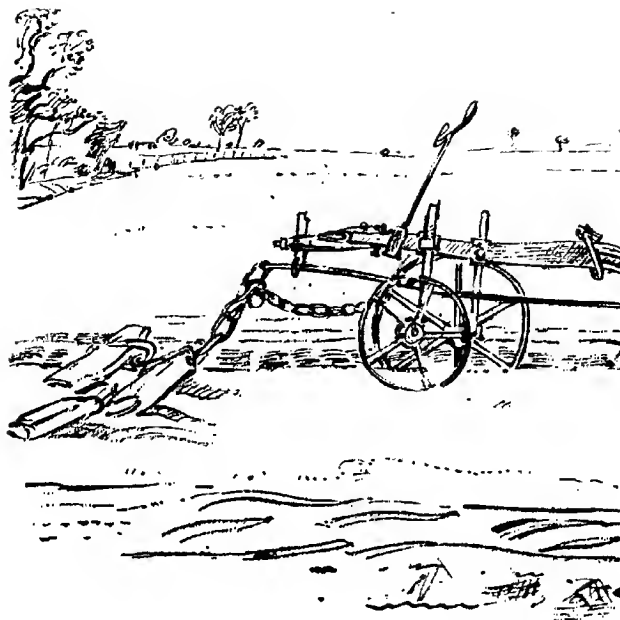
The first state, called natural, may be exemplified by primeval forests, tropical or temperate, or by any area of untouched prairie or steppe. Within such areas the fertility has been built up on which the human race has for so long subsisted; and which the human race has ravaged and destroyed with such rapidly growing efficiency within the last century or so. Such areas are occupied by more or less complicated associations of animals and plants, many of them of microscopic size. All these creatures are very closely interdependent, so that each local association which they form has almost an individuality of its own, and is closely adapted to the prevailing conditions of climate and subsoil. The physical linkages which express the interdependence of these very varied assemblages of creatures are nutritional in kind. Whatever each may discard during its life, and its whole body in death, is at once seized on by some other organism and so kept within the cycle of life. There is no delay and no waste. There is mutual adaptation between all the separate species, and there is collective adaptation to the environment. The interchanges of material which are the mechanism of the life of the association take place in various ways. For instance, one creature may eat all or part of another. But most of the interchanges take place through the medium of the soil, from which all creatures spring and to which they return. Thus it is that under natural conditions the activity and stability of the association are reflected in the activity and stability of the soil: in other words, in its fertility. We say that an association (we usually use the word community) springs from the soil. The statement is just as true the other way round. The fertility of the soil springs from the activity of the creatures associated with

it and with each other. It is a result of that activity, as well as being the foundation of it.

The second state is that in which man is dominant and fertility is maintained: that is to say, in which a human community is strongly established, and the maintenance of soil fertility is not a problem. A number of such cases have been the subjects of serious scientific studies. It is impossible in the space of a short essay to give any summary of even only a selected few. Though selection of suitable books of reference is not easy, the works of Sir Robert MacCarrison, Dr. G. T. Wrench, and the late Professor F. P. King taken together appear to provide the most comprehensive survey available. The peoples they have studied include, among others, the Hunza of north-west India and other Indian tribes, the Eskimo, the islanders of Tristan da Cunha, and the south-eastern Chinese.

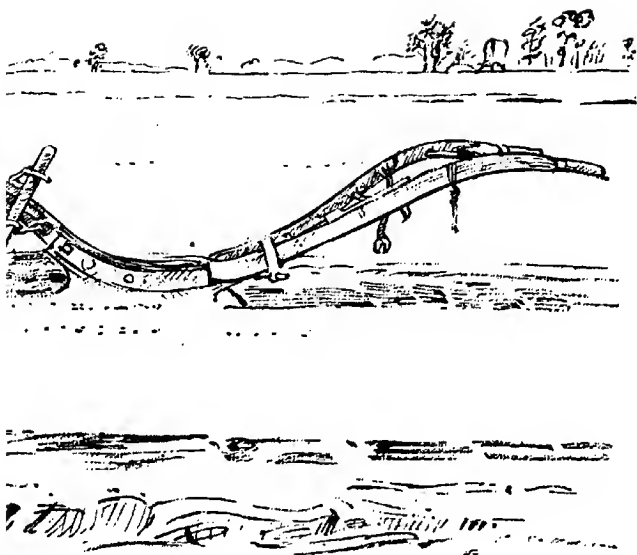
It is particularly relevant to our present purpose that these peoples, although mostly living at a high population density, have enjoyed stability over very long periods, and do not appear to have had any difficulty or problem in maintaining soil fertility indefinitely, although they had no imports and no knowledge of artificial fertilizers. Their relation to their environment and to their fellow creatures appears in fact to have been comparable to that of creatures forming an association under the conditions which have been called 'natural'; and, like these same creatures, they seem to have had no 'problem' of health. One thing stands out in the accounts of these peoples: their teeth, their digestions, and their general physical condition are as nearly perfect as could be. Their bodies are not a worry to them. Their lives are not longer than ours, but they keep their physical and mental powers unimpaired to the end. Their dispositions are cheerful and peaceable.

How unlike the third case: that of modern civilization, in which the maintenance of soil fertility is an ever-growing anxiety and the maintenance of health an obsession. This is the truth, in spite of the fact that people live longer than they used to. But longevity procured by a process of patching up, however skilful, is not health, and it is obvious that we know it. Conclusive proof of our obsession with the subject of health



can be found in almost any newspaper, particularly in the advertisements.

Simultaneously, and quite apart from conditions produced by war, more and more countries are finding it necessary to import part of their food. Also, in order to maintain the output of their farm lands, this country and apparently all highly civilized countries are finding it necessary to supply plant foods to their crops in chemical form. The consumption of 'artificial fertilizers' is increasing rapidly all over the world. There is a possibility, which many scientists would call a probability, that there will before long be a serious world shortage of the phosphatic compounds which are an indispensable and irreplaceable in-



gradient in such fertilizers. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the apparent necessity for artificial fertilizers in order to maintain output is clear evidence of a failure on the part of civilized mankind to establish associations or communities which are in harmony with their environment, so building up soil fertility rather than depleting it. An importation of elements essential to fertility takes the place of the maintenance of established fertility.

In many countries, too, and particularly in this country, importation of elements essential to fertility has taken place in another form: that is, in the form of imported feeding-stuffs for animals. Human foods, imported to this country to an even

greater extent, are of course also potentially a source of fertility to the soil: but the residues of human foods do not normally reach the soil, and so are ignored for the purpose of the immediate point at issue. That point is this. The elements imported as fertilizers or as feeding-stuffs for animals make no durable contribution to the fertility of the importing area. Indeed, as was the case in England between the wars, such importation can proceed on a large scale and be accompanied by a falling fertility. It is scarcely possible to lay too much emphasis on this point, which has by no means received the attention it deserves. In particular cases, for instance, in the feeding of cake to animals, the manure of those animals is enriched and bigger crops can be obtained from the land to which it is applied. This does not alter the astonishing fact that, since the importation of fertilizers and feeding-stuffs to these islands on a large scale, the general level of the fertility of our land has been falling fairly steadily. This has been disputed on grounds of increased average yields per acre. That, however, is irrelevant. Total imports and total production are the figures which matter for our purpose.

During this period we have been importing more and producing less. This wastage of potential fertility, this dispersal of what ought to enrich our soils, seems to me to provide indisputable evidence of an error of a fundamental kind in our whole outlook on agriculture and its place in civilization.

Furthermore: all these importations must come from somewhere. In fact, they must come from the mines or from the soils of other countries or areas. Those areas must be depleted of potential fertility, either by the exhaustion of mines (particularly of phosphates) or more conspicuously and more disastrously by an exhaustion of the soil which starts erosion and culminates in desert.

Surely a study of these simple and easily verifiable facts (inadequately though they be presented in this short essay) makes it clear beyond doubt that soil fertility and health are not two things but one. It becomes clear that neither can be attained by creatures like ourselves who have elected to live in a way which can (as I think) be shown to involve an absolute and increasing disharmony between the creature and the environment.

It is not unreasonable to suppose that the discontent with ourselves and with our neighbours, of which we see so much to-day, is but an aspect of this more fundamental disharmony.

The healthy, fertile, and balanced associations and communities of the past have developed unconsciously. For us, a conscious attempt to recover a true balance is necessary. We must go forward, not back. We need not forget the new knowledge, nor surrender our new powers: but we must find out how to use them in the right way. We are no longer 'natural men' in the Pauline sense: we are something more, either much better or (for the same reasons) much worse. Our task is the more difficult, but also the more glorious.

We have at our call an immense body of analytical and practical knowledge, amassed by modern science, now touching almost all fields of endeavour, even the most abstruse, such as psychology and sociology. Some small part of this knowledge may have been gained in the course of an unbiased search for pure and absolute truth. But this rarely happens. Most research is done with a conscious utilitarian purpose in view, but even when that is not the case, the direction of search and therefore the results are almost always unconsciously conditioned by some human aim. Thus, generally speaking, the means available to us will be such as are adapted to the pursuit of whatever may be the prevailing aim of the period. Science and its findings are so adapted.

The aim which, in fact, prevails is that which we pursue most whole-heartedly in practice, not in theory or in imagination. Whatever we seek first is what counts. In the modern period the prevailing aim has been a worldly one, perhaps most simply described by the single word 'prosperity.'

The result of giving priority to that aim is that we seek beyond everything else a kind of mechanical perfection, the chief object of which is a reduction of the immediate financial cost of production. We call it 'efficiency.' Efficiency may be a good servant, but it is a terrible master. It is a purely economic conception and as such has become our master. So it comes about that we feel compelled to go on producing more and more cheaply, for whoever is most efficient can undersell him who is

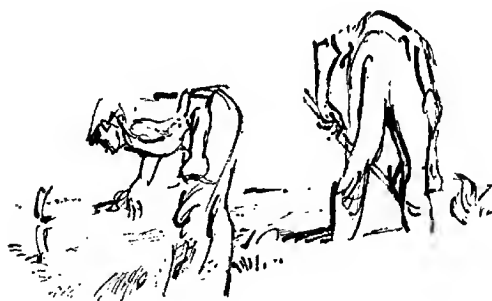
less so. We are forced to go on striving to reduce costs, and to do so, so to speak, at all costs: even at the cost of the quality of the product, the independence of the producer, and the fertility of the soil which makes production possible.

Our economic and financial system is demonstrably at fault, and has compelled farmers all over the world to exhaust natural fertility or go bankrupt, and often both. It must be altered, and that soon, because its continuance would make a restoration of fertility and health so difficult as to be almost impossible. This is not a political question. No parliamentary political party appears willing to contemplate changes of the required kind. But, however they come about, such changes will not by themselves bring about those other changes in our outlook on life which are so necessary. I think they are two such changes, though they and the reform of the economic system are not really three, but one.

Firstly we must come to see much more clearly the direction of the technical and social reforms which must come about in our agriculture and our civilization. It is no use being released from economic pressure and not knowing what to do with the resulting freedom. A technique for maintaining soil fertility otherwise than at the expense of some other place must be consciously evolved so that it can be taught. It is not certain that there is any one in the world to-day who is in a position to do the teaching. Certainly the knowledge cannot be found within what is now the orthodox scientific school of agricultural thought. That school of thought is wholly dominated by the present urge to reduce current financial costs. The new technique of agriculture will probably be found to involve much more than a mere change in what the farmer does from day to day. The whole structure of civilization, particularly in the economic sphere, must be affected.

Lastly, and comprehending both the other main requirements, we must readjust our aims. We must acquire a new sense of purpose, we must achieve a spiritual reorientation. As to how it will manifest itself I do not presume to suggest. But it is safe to say that one of the signs of its appearance will be a revolt from the mechanistic view of the world and from the related conception of man and his fellow creatures as being primarily cogs

in an economic machine, to be regulated and regimented and fed by the State or any other institution able to acquire the necessary power. Perhaps there are signs that such a revolt is beginning. But the strength of the forces which oppose it is enormous, so that the struggle must be long and hard. It is the struggle of the spirit which is in man to free itself from the forces of destruction and distraction which now encompass it, and which divide each man from his fellow men, and mankind from the rest of the living world. Thus, this spiritual struggle is at one with and part of the struggle to find that equilibrium between man and his environment which will secure health and maintain that fertility on which the life of man depends.





## X. GRASSLAND AND LIVE-STOCK

By MICHAEL GRAHAM

THE cook can use her book to make a good dish, but it takes more than the cookery book prescriptions to make a good party. The host and his family and the guests, the occasion, the decorations, even the news: all these come in, and unless the host appreciates them, and uses them all, the party will be no more than a collection of mildly interesting incidents.

The seedsman can say what grasses to sow, the chemist can say what plant foods are short in the soil, the vet can say how healthy each animal is at the moment; but the grazing will not be a success unless the master has a grip on all these things, and many more. Such mastery can only come by experience; but it can come more quickly if the principles of grassland are understood.

Principles are often best displayed by extreme examples—and I saw one last spring by the side of a Chiltern road. Some rubble had evidently been dumped there and levelled off a year before—perhaps exactly a year before, that is in mid April. I could see chalk or plaster, cinders, road metal, and a little soil through the scanty green covering. Certainly nobody had troubled to sow any seeds on it. But nature and our English climate had proceeded to make the three essential components of a good pasture. Firstly, there was wild white clover vigorously covering many square feet. Secondly, there were three palatable grasses: meadow grass, represented at this early stage in colonization by the garden weed *Poa annua*, rye-grass, and cocksfoot. Thirdly, there was a deep-rooting and palatable herb, in this case the dandelion, which is so liked by stock that it is not often allowed to flourish in pastures.

If we went, therefore, solely on the theory that the important thing about a pasture is to have the right kinds of grasses and herbs growing in it, we should be misled into expecting good pastures on certain kinds of rubble heaps. That, however, we know to be nonsense.

We all know, of course, that this rubble pasture will fail when summer comes, because there is not enough soil to hold the summer rain—the grasses will go grey-brown and the clover will shrivel. The dandelions, though, with their deep tap-root, will remain green. The warmth of spring, in this southern valley, has caused the grass and clover to grow on the rubble, but it will come to nothing in particular without another condition—namely, moisture—so one principle exposed by the extreme case of the rubble heap is ‘Warmth and water first.’

Given warmth and water, and a little soil, you will in England have grass; and the more warmth and water the more grass. That is the first principle, and there is nothing to gainsay it in good farming practice.

The application of the principle is, of course, not in the grass blades that we see, but in the roots that give the blades their water supply. So it is the roots that need warmth and water, and their health depends on the soil. This is merely another way of stating as part of the first principle that soil conditions govern the supply of grass.

We agreed that the rubble pasture of the roadside would fail because of lack of water in the soil, but the interesting question is why it has succeeded in making such a good show in April. The success is evidently due firstly to its free drainage, which shows up a third need in soil conditions, namely, air. This gives us warmth, water, and air.

But we are not quite finished with the rubble, because there is still to explain the excellent quality of the sward—wild white clover, rye-grass, and cocksfoot; not bents, nor nettles, nor twitch, nor fog. Experience from fields tells us at once that this has to do with the chalk or plaster among it, which, with the free drainage, makes it sweet, and palatable to animals. If we have a rainy month now, so that the roadside plot survives, there will be no animal that will pass it willingly. We can now write in as essential soil conditions: warmth, water, air, and lime—including other minerals with the lime. And we can sum up the whole of the first principle by saying that the soil conditions must be right.

To find another principle, let us consider any ordinary pasture.

I wrote that where there is warmth and water, and a little soil, there will be grass, but that is only true temporarily. If we shut up a field for twenty years there will not be much grass there at the end—it will mainly be covered with scrub and young trees.

If the field is used properly, however, the animals prevent this. If, on the other hand, the field is kept far too full of close-grazing animals, for instance rabbits or horses, there will again not be much grass at the end of twenty years, only some fine bents, and the rest of the soil occupied with moss and nettles. In some climates the whole soil will blow or wash away.

So the first principle being the care of the soil conditions, the second is grazing management. By varying the grazing management there is a whole scale of swards possible, and somewhere on that scale is the happy mean—the best sward for the kind of stock-keeping that is intended.

In between the extremes of trees and moss, there are a very great number of useful plants that go to make up various swards. Arranging the grasses in a very rough order of merit, there are: perennial rye-grass of many strains, with cocksfoot, again of several strains, equally good or nearly so; meadow grasses, especially the rough-stalked; meadow foxtail, which is of great value, but not very common; cat's-tail, dog's-tail, the fescues, the bents. Less useful kinds of grasses make their appearance and give some service when conditions are wrong for the better grasses. In the clover tribe the valuable kinds are: wild white clover, late-flowering red clover, alsike, which are true clovers; then lucerne, sainfoin, and kidney vetch, which are valuable but not common; then bird's-foot trefoil<sup>1</sup> and black medick, which are not much use, but are better than not having any clovers. Among the various other herbs I would put chicory, yarrow, burnet, and ribwort plantain, as the most useful, roughly in that order. Thus in the three classes there are twenty or thirty kinds of plants to make a sward from, and I have only mentioned the ones that are palatable, and therefore useful to the stock-keeper. They, with the less useful kinds, give an endless

<sup>1</sup> But in a hot summer it is bird's-foot trefoil which looks greenest among the other grasses, while grazing mouths have much relish for it.—EDITOR.

variety of combinations between the two extremes—trees and moss.

With so much scope for variety it is not surprising that a sward is to a large extent self-adjusting. This is worth putting down as a third principle. Let us again take some extreme cases. On old moorland and hill pastures the conditions are often such that only the finer bents and the finer fescues are represented from our list of useful kinds. Yet there is grazing there, of a sort—less on an acre than will keep a sheep—but grazing nevertheless. Kinds of grass have taken charge that can use even that acid soil and those cold exposed conditions, and still give some small quantity of sweet grazing. Or there is the damp low-lying pasture. Here no crop could be grown by ploughing, but cat's-tail and some other grasses will grow there and be palatable. On the thin soil over the chalk the dog's-tail makes good grazing, though meagre. On cold and impracticable clay there can, after a few years, be made excellent pasture. This self-adjustment of the sward is obviously very valuable economically, and that is why I incline to make a principle of it, giving three in all: soil condition, grazing management, adjustment. Experience is essential, but if these principles are borne in mind a man who studies his grass will learn the best practices quickly.

I have a dream—of a farm dominated, as many are, by sound management of the grass.

Under the shelter of a mountain there is a farmhouse, where the farmer and his family live their lives to the cheerful chatter of the beck behind.

The farm is noted in the county—not further afield—for the stamina of the young stock that are sold. The heifers only just make the grade for milk yield, but no one ever had a diseased one from this farm; and the pullets never fall to fowl paralysis, nor sheep to any of their ills.

Ewes and lambs and young cattle run as much as possible on the mountain, which has somehow been limed, to make up for all the lime that has walked down the mountain in the bones of young stock in years gone by. By keeping cattle on the mountain

in the summer the sheep benefit, because they have grazing *that is partly grown with the help of cattle dung, and are not so closely confined to the product of their own dung.* Also part of the mountain's crop consists of cattle flesh, so the sheep need not be crowded, as they have been on so many sheep runs.

This healthy mountain is not maintained without trouble. It is all limed occasionally, and parts of it have even been disked and reseeded. Most important of all perhaps, time has been made every summer to mow the bracken. This is used for bedding on the farm below, where a good deal of litter is needed, because no stock, except the ewes, are allowed out between October and April. The cattle live then entirely in covered yards, well littered down with bracken and straw.

Not that the stock would take any harm by being out in mild weather in autumn and spring, but the pastures would, if the cattle were on them when the grass is not growing. There is, however, some winter grazing: when the ewes come down to lamb, the aftermath of a hay crop is allowed to grow right up, and kept for this purpose in one field. Owing to this grazing in March and April, the field does not give as much grass that year as it would have done—the grass does not get a proper start—but the sacrifice is necessary, and the same field is not used this way two years running. Otherwise the sward would adjust itself against giving an 'early bite' at all, the early kinds of grasses being put at a disadvantage with their competitors.

On this farm there is one perfect pasture—only one, alas, even on this dream farm. It is the delight and solace of its master, who indeed does most of his planning with it under his gaze as he leans over the gate. When day-to-day affairs seem more than he can bear, and the hurry and hurry of commerce or government spreads out a feeler to grasp and disturb the small world of this mountain farm, the harmony can be restored by letting this pasture play gently on the mind, through sight, and scent, and hearing. It is best in late May, when the army of bees are savouring and serving the clover, and the beasts, after their first joy of the spring grass, are now restful, and showing the first signs of solid benefit from it.

Here in April there rises a thick nap of fresh green blades,

succulent, strong, and silky. The only flower among the grass is the dandelion, of which there are a few, one to every two or three square yards. Their delicate scent is not entirely wasted, because a few early bees find them, and their leaves will later provide that slightly bitter feed that stock are so fond of. The main bulk of the grass is formed of perennial rye-grass, that is a grass of moderate size, with its perfect green blades supported by their strong midrib, unfolding from a smooth shoot about a tenth of an inch across. Intimately mixed with the rye-grass is the wild white clover, with its creeping stem hidden in the sward, and compelled by the rye-grass to send up a leaf here and there, every four or six inches, on a long leaf stalk. In among the rye-grass stools can be found a number of other stools, looking very like miniature rye-grass—just as smooth, just as green, just as good to eat by the look of them, but much smaller. These are rough-stalked meadow grass. There is also one grass that is much larger, though it too has smooth leaves and looks good to eat. There is not a great deal of it, about one stool to a square foot. But it is much liked by the farmer, because it comes first of all the good grasses, and can help him in early April if he has animals that need to be out then. Already, with April not yet departed, it is sending up a few flowering stems, by which it can be recognized, as meadow foxtail.

The early rye-grass will be eaten down somewhat, soon enough to give the clover some light and air for its turn on the stage, when the rough-stalked meadow grass will compete with the clover on more equal terms; and neither rye-grass nor meadow grass will be allowed to send up many of their stringy or wiry flowering stems in June, when they are in their flowering stage. Consequently both of them will continue to grow blades throughout the summer. When autumn comes, the foxtail comes into season again, and eases the load on the rye-grass. The pasture is only moderately grazed then, so as to leave somewhat matured blades of grass to face the winter frosts.

There is said to be a mystery about this and other perfect pastures—pastures where, generation after generation, beasts may be fattened, at the rate of one bullock per acre or four sheep per acre, with no other food at all—but the mystery is no greater

than that in many another department of life where a multitude of factors have not been stated precisely, nor weighed one against the other. The fact is that we have these pastures, in a few regions in this country, and, seeing that we do not know how the mechanism that produces them works, it would be just as well not to monkey with them. All that should be done is to follow the best practices in their care: scatter the dung with sweeps of a fork; harrow and roll them in March; keep mixed stock, that is both cattle and sheep, on them; and graze them hard enough to let the soil see the sky for a week, once in a year or two.

We can be quite sure of one thing—that the key to the success of this pasture lies in the soil. If we part the grasses we always find bare soil among the stools—no moss covering it, and we always find something else, namely worm-casts. It is certain, at any rate, that among the many factors that make the pasture perfect, the work of the earthworm is a large one. The earthworm does its work by eating soil, which it deposits on the surface among the grass stools, thus letting air down among the grass roots. The earthworm needs air, down below there, and its mode of life gives it air. The roots of the grass also need air, because they, like every other living thing, must breathe, and the earthworm's activity gives them air.<sup>1</sup>

But the earthworm cannot live unless the soil has in it the fine pieces and fragments of vegetable matter that form its food, and if the earthworms are to continue to do their aerating work, these scraps must be fed into the soil. This is done by beetle larvae, such as the wireworm, which continually eat the roots of the grass, and thus enable the earthworm, and various essential bacteria, to live and play their part.

There is another use in the service rendered by wireworms and their relatives. Gardeners know that you cannot have fresh shoots in herbs without, from time to time, breaking up the old roots. So the cropping of grass blades that we see has to be accompanied by cropping and renewal of grass roots, which is where these grubs do their part. You could not get fresh young blades from tired old roots.

The bacteria, wireworms, and earthworms arrange that the

<sup>1</sup> Roots also relish the tunnels of the earthworm.—EDITOR.

old roots are pruned to nourish the new roots, because the earthworm keeps bringing soil up on to the surface, where it acts as a surface mulch, from which the plant foods are washed down into the top two or three inches, where the roots of the rye-grass and meadow grass live. The mole, who lives on earthworms, does the same thing in a rather clumsier manner, which is often inconvenient. But doubtless the earthworms need thinning too; they are subject to internal parasites, which will undoubtedly get a better hold on an earthworm population that is too dense and too old.

The tunnels and taps of the earthworm help the rain to get down into the soil, with its burden of nitrous acid and of dissolved air, and this is undoubtedly another service to the grass.

General loosening of the soil is also necessary to help aeration and percolation, and this loosening is done by the tap-roots of the clover and dandelion. As the roots grow and thicken the soil has to move, and this must be the chief compensating agent to the treading of the stock, which would otherwise pack the soil harder and harder, and thus reduce aeration, water penetration, and the travels of the important earthworm. As R. H. Elliot wrote: 'The cheapest, deepest, and best tillers, drainers, and warmers of soil are roots.'

The deep roots do another service. These plants are known to be 'mineral efficient,' that is, their shoots contain valuable minerals, even when growing on soils that are poor in minerals. The acid formed in the breathing of their roots is evidently particularly potent in liberating the vast store of mineral, lime, phosphate, and others, that there is in every soil—enough to grow a hundred crops in the poorest. In this way the minerals can reach the stock, and, through their dung, can nourish the rye-grass and meadow grass, whose roots have not this power, principally perhaps because they do not go deep enough.

There are other fields on my dream farm that are far from perfect pastures. In some of them the soil never saw the light of day when I took them over, and there were no worms there at all under the mat of old dead grass, with its scanty covering of the far too economical fine bent grass. These I work as leas, four years in grass, and four in crops. In the poorer leas I rely



on cocksfoot and late red clover, with yarrow to help make a soil quickly, and chicory to anchor it and bring up the minerals. There is also a low-lying meadow where I take late hay and graze cattle and geese, and it never suffers from stain, although mainly grazed with cattle, because it floods in winter; and the grass is sweet in spite of the sour soil conditions, because I never let it get long—except for the late hay in the driest time of year. Cat's-tail flourishes there, and alsike is the only useful clover.

And because, although there is no really good scientific evidence on the subject, I am anxious lest imported food and artificial manuring affect the health of my stock, and of my family, I grow most of the food for both on this farm, and grind flour for myself and my neighbours as it is wanted, and the grist for the cattle.



## XI. FORESTRY AND HUSBANDRY

By ROLF GARDINER

Clad in fabrics produced from wood, living on wood sugar, wood proteins, and meat and cheese from wood-fed cattle, with a schnapps ration made from 'grain' alcohol obtained from sawdust, German soldiers move to the Russian battle lines in wood-gas-driven trucks, which are greased from tree stump lubricants, and run on Buna tyres made from wood alcohol. Spreading misery and destruction with explosives manufactured from the waste liquors of wood-pulp mills, they are assisted in their nefarious work by squadrons of plywood planes, while the German propaganda division takes a motion-picture record of selected items of the action on film made of wood cellulose acetate.<sup>1</sup>

Wood, composed of cellulose and lignin, is to-day being exploited as the universal raw material out of which anything can be made. Modern chemistry, serving the needs of so-called civilization, has achieved supreme ingenuity in extracting every sort of material and spirit from that symbol and manifestation of life, the tree. But this cleverness is mainly harnessed to the diabolic engine of war, and war is now not so much an attack on civilization as an automatic part of it. For modern civilization has become a consuming Moloch, a predatory octopus devouring the natural resources of the earth with reckless unconcern for posterity and a total lack of gratitude for the pastures of human subsistence. Against this colossal abuse of man's heritage the counsels of the wise and far-sighted are rightly being urged, and a movement is slowly gaining force which promises to become the conscience of mankind and to restore the spirit of husbandry now usurped by that of expedience. If this counter-movement does not succeed in redressing the automatic tendencies of continuous exploitation, cumulative disaster will overwhelm life on the earth, and our planet may well become as bald and barren as the mountains of the moon.

Forests and rivers are the parents of civilization, and the

<sup>1</sup> 'The Rediscovery of Wood,' *American Forests*, September 1942.

intimate connection of these two great natural agencies has often been described. 'Rule mountain, rule river; rule river, rule country' is an ancient maxim of the Japanese, who to-day prefer the banditry of war to their ancestral care of land. The forests of the hills absorb the rainfall of the clouds and redistribute the beneficent moisture by the conduits of streams and rivers to the valleys and plains. The vast cycle of water, passing back and forth from sea to heaven, from heaven to earth, and from earth to sea, is under the regal control of the forests; for these determine the tempo and rhythm of this mysterious circuit upon which all life depends. Remove or diminish that control and what disasters ensue: raging torrents invade the valleys, leaving behind them wreckage of the soil; floods overwhelm the lowlands and silt up the estuaries; the wealth of the mountains is discharged upon the sea and, the storms subsiding, drought stalks through an eroded land. Such disasters are as old as Plato, who described them in his *Critias*; they are as old as the many vanished civilizations which have sometime garnished the earth. But to-day there is no part of the world which is immune from such catastrophe: civilization is universal, the spirit of exploitation general, and the means of it more ingenious and powerful than at any previous period of history. Hence husbandry begins with care of the forests on which the very soils depend both for evenly distributed moisture and for that replenishment of humus without which nothing can grow.

European civilization is derived from forest soils and our cities and cultivated lands are clearings in what was chiefly deciduous woodland. In the north the pine and spruce are mixed with birch and alder; in the centre stretches the broad deciduous belt of oak and ash and beech; then again come the coniferous woodlands of the northern slopes of the Alps, the larch, but also silver fir, with beech and pine and spruce, and on the Mediterranean side the chestnut, poplar, cypress, olive, and ilex. Britain south of the border falls within the deciduous zone of oak, ash, beech, and wych elm. But other trees have immigrated since time immemorial, and it is as difficult to disinter the native forest skeleton as it is the foundation stock of the native race. The art of the forester partly consists in blending species which will

thrive together in sympathetic support of one another and the whole, and in excluding species which are either unsuitable to the district and likely to misaffect the soil or which will overrule the more valuable trees. An ill-considered forest policy will achieve the opposite results: thus the exclusive planting of pine in parts of north-east Germany a century ago extinguished the native oak and beech forests, and led to a deterioration of the soil, while at home in the New Forest the planting of pines as shelter-belts since 1776 or earlier has led to the weed-like spread of this species over the 'lawns' of the heath, to the progressive ousting of the beech and healthy oak, and to an increasingly acid condition of the soil. Man is constantly interfering with nature; nature is constantly taking revenge on man. The art of husbandry is co-operation between the two to maintain a harmonious condition of balance.

English woodlands of to-day are the descendants of the manorial waste of the feudal system. Until the seventeenth century the abundant forests sufficed as the unexhausted reserves of soil fertility, wild life, and pasturage. The lord of the manor or the king (who alone owned 'forests' proper) kept the rights of the chase; the commoners had rights of pasturage for swine and cattle where these did not encroach on the needs of the royal or baronial deer; timber continued to be exploited for building and fuel, and the woods ebbed slowly as the cultivated land increased. Then came the development of England as a maritime power, and the demands on timber for shipbuilding made drastic inroads into the forest reserves. Early legislation had protected 'encoppicements,' the underwood of hazel, ash, and chestnut, against browsing cattle and deer. The Statute of Woods of 1543 ordered the replanting of forest trees 'to cure the spoils and devastations that have been made in the woods,' this despoliation having largely ensued on the dissolution of the monasteries, when their extensive woodlands passed into other less scrupulous hands. Queen Elizabeth's surveyors, Roger Taverner and his son John, who followed him, made surveys of the woodlands and described the beginnings of the 'coppice with standards' system which first succeeded wild woodland, the protected underwood being set with seeds of oak and beech (with thorn as a protective cover).

In Charles II's reign, alarm at the diminishing woodlands led to a survey being made on behalf of the newly founded Royal Society by its reporter, John Evelyn. His *Sylva*, published in 1664, was the first lengthy discourse on the management of woods not for hunting, but for the replenishment of timber reserves. From this time onward woodlands were enclosed for the protection of trees and their natural or 'artificial' reproduction.

Throughout southern England these woods consisted of coppice with oak and ash standards, usually sown or planted in lines fairly wide apart. The coppice was cut on an eight to twelve years' rotation for charcoal and hurdle-making, turnery wood and fencing; the standards were left to grow: in the case of oak for a hundred and twenty years. The mature oak woods which are being felled to-day were planted during the Napoleonic wars. Most of the trees are rather short in timber length owing to the wide spacing allowed by the coppice system. This was suitable in the days of wooden shipbuilding, which required 'knees' and 'bends' for the curved parts of boats; it is neither ideal silviculture nor does it yield the maximum amount of timber of which the soil is capable. On the Continent the coppice system was superseded early in the nineteenth century by more strictly silvicultural or economic systems aiming at maximum or sustained yields of timber. In England the coppice system lingered on because timber could be cheaply imported from the Baltic or from America, and because landowners were coming to regard their woodlands more and more from a purely sporting point of view. As agriculture and rural industries decayed, the coppice became mismanaged and was itself finally abandoned. The rabbit, sworn foe of all foresters, next destroyed the 'stools' and saplings, while pheasants and pigeons devoured acorns and beechmast; thus a halt was called to natural regeneration. Enlightened landowners, however, continued to plant shelter-belts, spinneys, and amenity woods and, as these were chiefly on open ground and quick growth was desired, the coniferous species, such as larch and fir, were favoured, while the old hard-woods slumbered on to be devastated in the wars of the present century. Now, too, the soft-woods have been clear-felled to feed the mines

with 'props,' while immature oak, ash, and chestnut, in fact anything over three inches in diameter, is being ruthlessly slaughtered for the same purpose.

The conversion of the coppice-with-standards woodlands to high forest has been a large part of the story of continental forestry during the past hundred years. The old system was practised in Germany, according to some authorities, as early as A.D. 600. It furnished fuel from the coppice, and food in the form of nuts and leaves from the standards for pasturing swine and cattle, and timber for building. The standards were reserved in a systematic manner as early as the sixteenth century. As the population increased and industries developed, the inroads into the timber resources became more and more severe, and many forests were depleted or spoilt. Early in the nineteenth century a new scientific system of forest management was introduced by Heinrich von Cotta (1763-1844, director of the Forest Academy at Tharandt in Saxony). This was the system of clear-cutting and direct replanting in order to obtain the quickest financial return from fast-growing coniferous timber. In effect the native mixed woods of spruce, silver fir, Scots pine, and beech were clear-felled and replanted with pure spruce, the object being the more economic management and quicker returns of the even-aged, uniform fir forest. This policy was pursued for a time with great enthusiasm and thoroughness, and with undoubted immediate success, although Cotta himself viewed its indiscriminate adoption with alarm as early as 1820. The story of German forestry (admittedly the pattern and pacemaker of all schools of silviculture<sup>1</sup>) throughout the subsequent century has

<sup>1</sup> The French and Swiss schools of forestry have throughout tended to follow the German model, and there are some fine examples of silviculture in France, where 'jardinage' (the selection system) is practised in mountainous regions such as the Jura and Vosges. In Scandinavia, especially Finland and Sweden, there are highly scientific schools of forestry which pay great attention to ecological factors. Holland and Denmark, not usually thought of as forest countries, have a higher proportion of land under cultivated woods than Britain, and their farmers are taught to tend their farm wood-lots and shelter-belts as seriously as their fields. In eastern Europe there is less and less real forestry, except in Czechoslovakia and parts of Hungary and Poland where

been one of increasing criticism of monocultural methods, of their progressive modification and modulation, and finally of their entire abandonment under the new forest law of 1934, which forbids clear-felling, and re-establishes the mixed or uneven-aged forest as a general principle.

This story is of exceptional interest because it forms a parallel with the so-called scientific extractive agriculture which came to dominate the farming of the great plains of America and Russia. The planting of pure spruce or pine forests led eventually to every sort of trouble and unbalance; destruction by fires, pests, insects, and infections; the deterioration of the forest soils by desiccation or increasing acidity; the exhaustion of humus by exposure of the soil during the clear-cutting intervals, and by the absence of litter and leaf-fall from mixed species and soil-improving trees, such as the beech; a decline in yield and quality through the gradual weakening of the spruce or pine types now the parents of successive tree generations; in short all the retributive ills which ensue wherever nature is enslaved and treated as a factory.

The evolving of better methods, aiming at mixed woods naturally regenerated by skilful opening of the tree canopy (enabling the thinned-out and selected mother trees and the wind to perform the work elsewhere done by laborious hand-planting), is a fascinating tale. These methods, the 'uniform,' 'group,' 'irregular shelter wood,' 'strip,' and 'wedge' systems, carry the names of highly skilled German, Austrian, and Swiss foresters, which are household words to the trained silviculturist. But at the end of this extraordinarily elaborate journey we arrive back at the conception of *Dauerwald* or 'continuous forest' maintained by natural regeneration and selective fellings in which the forester copies and collaborates with nature, guiding and supporting her with a light hand. A parallel conclusion is being reached by the advanced schools of ley-farming, which

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German influence and example have been at work. The Russians have treated their vast forests as 'lumber' to be exploited and exported. Before the present war they felled a vast belt along their western frontier, for strategic reasons, with appalling and far-reaching results.

seek to establish swards containing *not only* productive commercial grasses and clovers, but also herbs and weeds whose presence is now found to exert a subtle influence both on the grass mixture and the soil, and consequently on the health of the stock supported by them. Such systems, silvicultural and agricultural, are, of course, far from pure reversion to haphazard *laissez-faire*: they require infinite skill and judgment. The return to more natural methods is a cultured, not a barbaric process, deliberate rather than romantic. In organic silviculture there persists the great technical problem of obtaining regeneration of two dissimilar types of tree, the light-demanding species such as oak, ash, larch, pine, and spruce, and the shade-bearing beech, silver fir, hornbeam, and cedars, and of preventing all 'continuous' woods from becoming dominated by the latter.

It is a sad reflection on the backwardness and insularity of English policy that whereas on the Continent every sort of attempt has been made first to modify and finally to overthrow monocultures, at home both the British timber trade and the Forestry Commission have been allowed to pursue the short-sighted methods of clear-felling. Moreover, wherever forestry is practised, planting is accepted as the normal method of regenerating woods. Apart from a few exceptional private estates there is no silvicultural *system* in practice worthy of the name. Our forest management, by and large, is haphazard, happy-go-lucky, opportunistic. The Forestry Commission, planting bare land with a policy aiming at maximum timber production, and with mere side-glances at other rural factors, has adopted monocultural methods and even-aged woods. If it had observed its original terms of reference, it might have aided landowners to evolve silvicultural systems suited to the immemorial woodland soils of England and Wales. These soils are, on the whole, more kindly and suitable to the growing of trees, the climate, with its higher rainfall, more equable, than the Continent's. Indeed, if ever there was a country of trees it is England. Nowhere do individual trees and spinneys grow more healthily and graciously; nowhere is such an astonishing variety of species possible. Yet our woodlands are the victims of pitiful mismanagement and neglect, for which the impoverished landowner carries only half



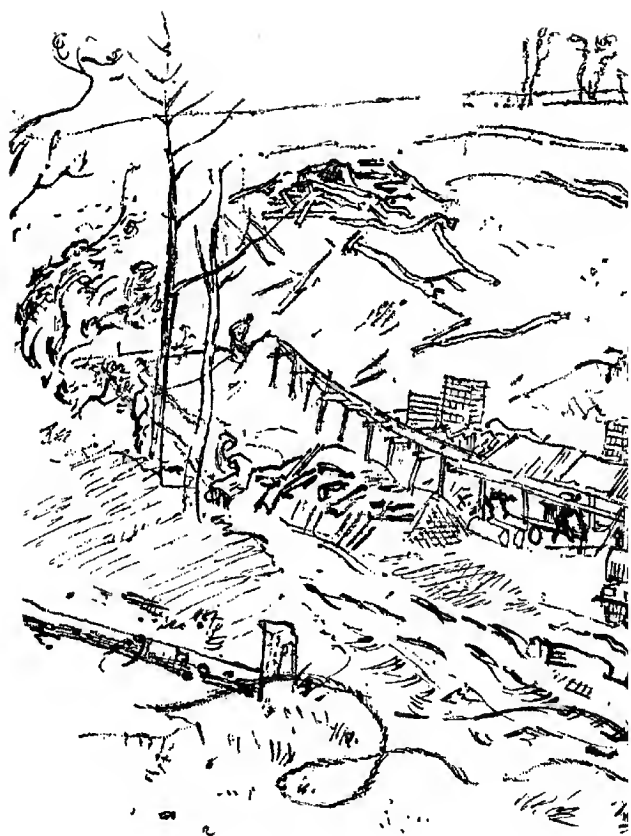
the blame. Now, the State, rightly concerned, proposes wide-scale interference through a department with only twenty-four years of forestry experience, and imbued with a silvicultural outlook which is, by all continental standards, a hundred years out of date.

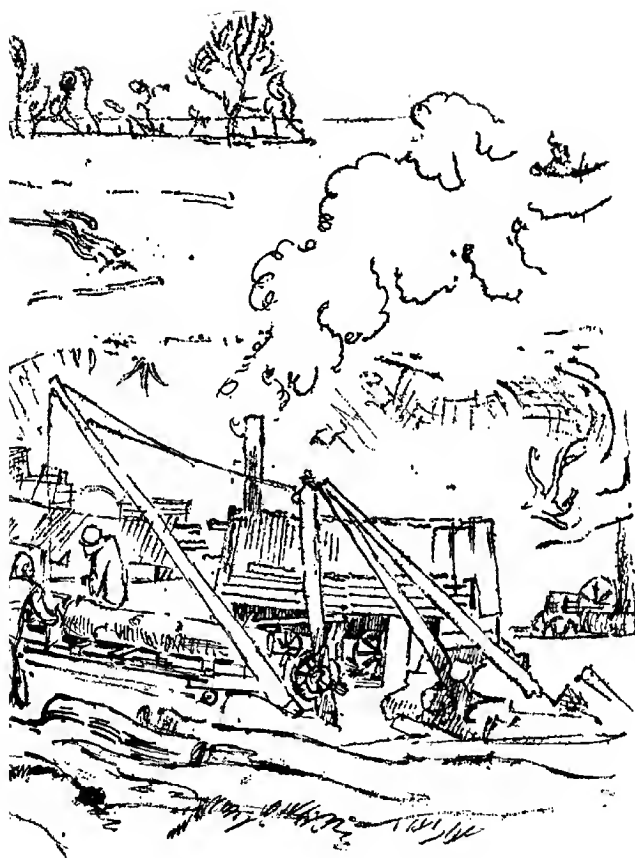
The Forestry Commission proposes the establishing of five million acres of woodland in England, Scotland, and Wales, of which about three million acres will be planted on agricultural or bare land, and two million acres on traditional woodland sites. The greater part of this forest area will be under State control and in State ownership. Landowners are, however, to be given the chance of 'dedicating' their woodlands to proper forestry; in return for which they will receive critical advice and financial assistance. The final organization of this ambitious plan is not yet determined, and, at the time of writing, a struggle is in progress as to who or what shall be the ultimate forest authority. The dangers of a central specialized direction are clear. Such a forestry department in this country may tend to ignore the wider landscape and rural values which are inherent in any organic pattern. If it correlates woodlands with agriculture it will be by negotiation rather than by the homely local knowledge of resident landowners. It may, indeed, ignore local needs and disregard all those issues inseparable from the organic approach in planning such as: the planting of woods to regulate water-flow and to maintain soil humidity on farm land; the provision of shelter-belts and spinneys for the protection and sustenance of stock and growing crops; the cultivation of coppice and small woods for supplying the needs of local village industries. In fine, its dominant policy will just be: *the production of timber as fast and as cheaply as possible*. To assume this is not to jeer at the zeal of a civil service department; it is to forewarn optimists of what may be inevitable once we hand over forestry to a single specialized authority.

The alternative is some form of more self-reliant co-operative control in the landscape regions of Britain, supported by a wise and liberal-minded co-ordinating authority at the centre, either a Minister of Agriculture and Forests, or a Minister of Lands. In such a scheme the present War Agricultural Executive

Committees might be expanded to give local assistance to farming, forestry, rural industries, and land planning generally, being remodelled as county or regional land utilization committees. Such a system would be surely as workable in peace as in war. But our bureaucratic planners are in a hurry. They may argue that the development of such regional co-operative bodies will be too slow, that there is too much dead wood in the surviving land-owning system, that local leadership is narrow and selfish, that anything short of a professional State forestry service, carrying out a regulated national plan, will fail to 'deliver the goods.' The argument may be plausible enough. But is it wise? In the social service state there are, it seems, just two types of people, the planners and the planned for. Talent, ambition, and enterprise are capitalized in a vast directive machine. Everybody wants to direct, inspect, teach, or advise: *nobody wants to do the job itself!* Such is the foolish state of affairs towards which we are tending.

But there are signs that some anti-bureaucratic movement may be taking shape in the minds of many young men and women at present in the Services. Much of this thought is just a despairing cynicism, a shrug of the shoulders at the inevitable planner's State. Much may be romantic longing for a better life. But if those who have faith and wisdom can lift away these heavy stones of despair, cynicism, or illusion, and free the clamorous life beneath, they may enable the younger men to fulfil a better destiny. Instead of joining the bureaucracy, our able young men will demand status on the land itself; they will want to tend fields and trees themselves, not to supervise others from offices and high-powered cars. Soil and skill will mean more than secretariats and salaries. Demobilization may offer a unique opportunity, at once practical and social, if as many woodland estates as possible can give accommodation to groups of demobilized men and women who are prepared to work on the land. For projects of afforestation and replanting are impossible without ample supplies of credit and man-power, and a check to the land-wastefulness of death duties. If the State could guarantee the one to approved estates and the other by giving freedom to the demobilized armies to undertake such work,





much might be accomplished. For while engaged on these practical tasks the young men and women might determine not only their own future lives, but that of many parts of the countryside. Such men and women, first apprenticed to woodland reclamation and, through that training, to other rural trades, might become the parishioners of both resuscitated and new village communities. Land-settlement schemes would evolve in the wake of the replenished woods and the old 'waste' become the new 'wealth' of a truly self-governing and self-determining England.



## XII. THE SMALL FARM

By ADRIAN BELL

IN England the average size of a farm does not exceed one hundred acres; so we are a nation of small farmers, though the larger units get more publicity. Are these small units adapted (or adaptable) to modern conditions, or should they be amalgamated into larger units? Presumably the size of the average holding has increased: it may be assumed that in the days of open-field farming the average amount of land held by the individual was very much smaller. Was it an effective instrument of production? Yes, probably as much so as the available tools would allow. It depended for its success on the co-operative use of the larger farm machinery, i.e. plough and horse-power. The rest of the farm implements were for hand use. Nowadays, if the same condition were to apply—if the small farm depended for its proper working on shared machinery—the problem would be much more complicated. Formerly father and sons could go out with sickles and scythes and reap their corn when it suited them; to-day they must wait till neighbours Jones and Brown are done with the binder. The same applies to almost all the operations of modern farming: each requires its machine; it requires it at a certain time, and the weather and the season brook no delay. For instance, good husbandry decrees that one should put the cultivator through one's stubbles directly the corn is carried, to germinate and destroy seeds of weeds. Its only other use—apart from stirring bare fallows, but bare fallows are a thing of the past—is the doubtful one of breaking down furrows for spring crops. One is more likely to pull up mud, and heavy harrows work the land more kindly and better. So is one to keep an expensive cultivator for use in about one week in the year? The same question applies in a lesser degree to tractor, tractor-plough, reaper, mower, disk-harrows, rib-roller, etc. If many of these things are not used at the right moment they can do more harm than good, and

sound as the idea of co-operative farm machinery may appear, in actual practice the good farmer, having fretted himself waiting for his neighbour to be done with a tool, takes the first opportunity to buy one for himself, even if he has to borrow money for it.

Can it be 'economic,' then, for a small farm to have all this machinery? The answer seems to be, in part, that if machinery is taken care of, the less it is used the longer it lasts, and a cultivator, drill, or binder is not a thing that grows out of date; its adequacy is fixed. And it does make a man feel master of his job. The tractor is the implement most likely to grow obsolete, but that is the one which gets most wear and tear—even on a small farm.

Of course the tractor is at present a crude form of power; an efficient petrol-paraffin engine is a contradiction in terms. It is wasteful (on light loads dilution of lubricating oil by unvaporized paraffin amounts to about twenty per cent); it is unwieldy. Our posterity will look back on our tractors as we look back on flint axe-heads. To drag one's plough *behind* one is, of course, ridiculous; unless it is for the purpose of breeding a race of people with twisted necks. In future, by developing the principle of the tool bar, it is likely that the tractor will embody plough, cultivator, hoe, etc., and much fewer *separate* implements may be necessary.

At present it is in the national interest that the small farmer, in common with others, should produce milk and corn, with perhaps veal and vegetables as by-products. Is it also in the interests of good husbandry? Yes, if the farmer is unwavering in his determination to consume (i.e. stamp into manure) all his wheat-straw stacks.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary for him to keep his eye on that aim, because in the double job that milk and corn entail, the littering of yards, sheds, and loose-boxes is apt to be scamped. It is much less trouble to have cows standing in a pasture all winter (though they do themselves and the pasture no good), because they require no littering. With horned cows there is a risk of their injuring one another in yards, but if any bad-

<sup>1</sup> Five of them were burned this year between my village and the next, two miles away. In Wiltshire, the straw is more often than not burned after the combine-harvester.—*EDITOR*.

tempered ones are segregated, that risk is minimized; and they *are* making manure for the arable, which was formerly the function of the corn farmer's bullocks. Previously the cow-keeper did not worry about fertility: he bought his milk in bags, and retailed it in bottles.

Without doubt it is a good thing that the cow-keeper must plough up, and it need not be a bad thing that the arable farmer must convert some of his crops into milk. But each has added a whole-time job to what was before a whole-time job. Two whole-time jobs to be dovetailed into one day. Arable milk is the mainstay of British agriculture (and of wartime Britain); and it is *hard work*.

Let us see how the small farm fulfils these present needs. In the first place the small farmer, the family farmer, only saves labour by using machinery in order to devote himself to other labour. If he can plough more quickly he can do more ditching and draining: if he can cultivate more quickly he can cultivate more often. When our farms are as neat as gardens, as corner-clean, then we can say that machinery has reached saturation point; and then we *may* see the small farmer spending Bank Holiday by the seaside. But I doubt it.

Lord Portsmouth has said that modern farm machinery is permissive of evil. That is true: it is the crux of modern invention that it confers power, it is permissive—of great good or of great harm: the pendulum swings both ways. But the small farmer is traditionally trustworthy in this respect—that is to say, the average British farmer is. If your fields are few, and you know every one intimately, you are less likely to put your tractor on at the wrong time. And it is of the nature of tractors in relation to British weather and soil, that they can do great good, quickly, at certain times, and great harm at other times. So for maximum results it is desirable that a tractor should stand idle in a shed awaiting the right moment on a few acres, rather than that it should be in almost daily use on many.

The small farmer, however, has achieved an effective working harmony between tractor and horse. On a hundred acres it would be necessary to have four horses (five really, to allow for litter-cart plus ploughing daily) without a tractor. Otherwise



ploughing would drag on into the new year. Much better for the land to have it all broken up directly after harvest; then stirred and reploughed (by horses, if you like), as weather may permit. Likewise to break up hay leys in July. Commonly, hay leys are much too hard for horses to break up in July—more likely they would break ploughs, whipple-trees, and their own hearts. Also it would take great skill to manage four or five horses so that they shared all work equally. In normal practice it is much more likely for three of them to have long periods of idleness. Periods of idleness followed by spurts of maximum effort are the worst thing possible for horses.

Ruskin spoke a great truth (or was it a half truth?) when he said that not till all muscle was fully employed should machines be used, because muscle rots with idleness, but iron does not. The tractor allows of full employment of two horses on a farm of up to a hundred acres, but it takes off them undue burdens which other machinery has imposed. The invention of the binder, for instance, which is now regarded almost as a 'traditional' implement, took a burden off man's shoulders and laid it on the horse; and a heavy burden too. Binders are popularly known as 'horse-killers'; and the ploughing of much of our heavy land entails something very near to cruelty to the horse. On the other hand, such jobs as carting, row-hoeing, light harrowing are eminently suited to the horse, with his ease of manœuvre.

This economy of effort is a real one, and any suggestion that the tractor has ousted the horse from the land is disproved by the price of horses. It does not even mean less live-stock on the farm, for fewer horses mean more cows; and on a limited acreage it is important that the food available should be used as productively as possible.

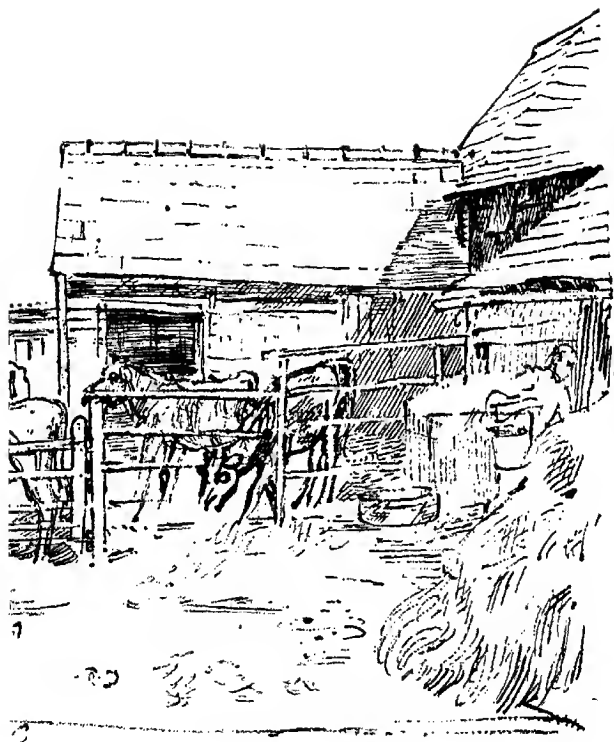
So it may be assumed that a semi-mechanized small farm is not an uneconomic unit to-day. A fully mechanized farm *is* uneconomic, whether it be of fifty acres, or five hundred, or five thousand, because it is wasteful in the present state of tractors to use them for light loads. The small farmer is more likely to use that discrimination in the use of the machine which is essential to good soil-texture and good economy, being less theory-ridden.

That brings us to another side of modern farming—the cows. These are definitely better managed in small herds than in large ones, and depend for their well-being on the daily attention of someone who really cares. And who conceivably will care as much as the man to whom they belong? Even on large farms cows are split up into herds, each under a cowman whose personal responsibility they are. The same of course applies to poultry. There is a good case, on the other hand, for sheep to be used in large flocks folded over a number of farms.

Everything hangs on the question of management, particularly in the case of the arable-cum-dairy holding which seems to be becoming the typical farm of the country. Now arable and dairy, as I have said, are two jobs; and on the large farm two jobs they remain—the cowman's, and the head ploughman's or foreman's. On the small farm they must be combined, and one of the chief problems is how to be both milking and out on the land early in the morning. In the days of horse-strength only, it was necessary to work the full day on the land to get through the season's work. Now, the tractor speeds up the preliminary work of ploughing and harrowing, so that it does not matter if you do start your drilling after breakfast, when all the labour is available. You can spend two days drilling where formerly you spent one, because you have that other day in hand.

In this high-pressure and high-production farming of the ley, the dairy, and the corn, flexibility of labour is essential. One of the drawbacks of the present emergency is the lack of flexibility. The land-girl who can milk may not be able to drive a tractor or manage two horses on the harrows, to hedge, or to ditch. You can't expect her to cart corn to the mill, because there may not be anybody there to help her unload when she arrives. And so on. How is it on the large farm? This is departmentalized; a skilled man manages each department—cows, sheep, plough. The farmer holds all together. While all goes well his troubles are the mild and chronic ones of differences of opinion with his various men over the feeding of sheep and cows and depth of ploughing. In an emergency there is slightly more flexibility. The cowman has 'flu, and someone can be found to milk: the hedger can carry sacks of corn, and harrow and horse-hoe, even





if not plough. The shepherd maybe could do these things too, but most likely won't—or hasn't the time. Shepherds are the most independent men on earth.

But, of course, the supremely flexible nucleus of farm labour is the family. Tom works the horses, Dick tends the cows, both can drive the tractor, and father supervises and does something of everything himself. In nine cases out of ten, mother can be called upon to milk three or four cows at a push; also she can chop out and single roots—not a job you can do straight out of an office, even that. The younger children can soon take their part, and ease the pressure at the crucial time, which more and more becomes early summer as much as harvest. The tractor has taken some of the pressure off harvest, because on even a small farm you may be cutting one crop and carting another at the same time. But the tractor cannot help you to chop out, single, and side-hoe roots and kale, which must all be done by hand. And, of course, with a keen farming family time is flexible too—a very important point.

It is curious and rather baffling to one who farms the average-sized English farm among other small owner-occupiers, to hear the pleas put forward by agricultural policy-makers, or would-be policy-makers, for the amalgamation of small farms into large, say thousand-acre units. One begins to wonder, have they had any experience of what actually goes on on these large units—and on these small ones? They seem to think in terms of Diesel-engine capacity, combine-harvester scope, not in terms of half-hours, and the time taken to fetch a gang of harrows from a distant field. Yet these are the joints of the day, the time taken to get started in the morning, to switch from one job to another, to make use of a shower of rain for a necessary barn job—and that *quickly*. Labour is the most expensive item of farming, and it can trickle away through these gaps—no, pour: I have seen it. And the larger the unit the more overseers and under-overseers between the man and the master, the wider yawn (yawn is the right word) these gaps of inertia and lack of co-ordination, and a cataract of wasted time drops continually into the limbo of don't care. These policy-makers and big planners seem to think that all you need to do is to find a good man and put him

in charge of a department, and all will run as smoothly as a well-oiled machine. How do you find this good man? How plentiful is he? And how good will he be over another man's goods, or, for that matter, a committee's? Won't he have side-ways-looking ambitions of his own, even out of his very 'goodness,' and his best eye on a different target?

These big people, of course, can never find this out, because their employees always see them coming; so the wheels are turning and the farm hands are jumping to it—as far as in them lies. Even the ordinary business man, who buys a farm as a side-issue, and puts a bailiff in charge, would be horrified if he knew how things went on there while he is being the martinet in his office. On the next farm, maybe, run by two brothers and their widowed mother, such a little marvel of organization is in motion—cows, horse-hoeing, hay-carting—as would put even his office routine in the shade, could he see it. But he thinks them backward folk.

It should be possible for the master to know at once if Daisy has a sore teat or Fillpail a lumpy bag; to see that Diamond has lost a shoe before his hoof begins to break; to mix the food, to grease the tractor, work the horses at least twice a week, milk each cow himself at least once a day, visit each field at least twice a week, be in the field at the start of every job. Any scale of farming that precludes these minimum contacts I should say falls short of good management. The joints begin to leak. Even on a well-run farm of five hundred acres they do—I have seen them. If you work, often unshaven and rather dirty, as a small farmer among small farmers, you are, as it were, on the other side of the counter; and where you come in contact with the big organization you see surprising things. When you are working as hard as you know how, to fit in field work between milkings, and you find two tractor men waiting for some new parts that should have come last night, and you go to work on your fields, and coming back for the afternoon milking you pass that way again, and find them still waiting—nobody had told them even to pull up some weeds—then you begin to wonder about 'large-scale efficiency.' And when in the course of ordinary days you find this example multiplied again and again, then your wonder turns

to a kind of horror at the greater and greater bureaucracy and the greater and greater waste, the stupendous avalanche of wasted, listless hours (well-paid ones, too) in this once thrifty yeoman England. If it were a choice, it were better to have the old hard masters, the tyrants of the field.

But surely we can stem this wastage without that, by the remedy whereby hard work forgets itself in creative ownership. All this cumbersome machinery of rates and hours, this talk of parity with industrial conditions, is fundamentally unsound. If you have experienced the day-to-day business of farming, both large-scale and small-scale, you realize how the more the farming unit tries to approximate to the industrial one, the greater wastage there is; because you lose flexibility, and to cope with vagaries of weather and crops flexibility is a *sine qua non*.

And how bad it is for the young to work in gangs and shifts! I have seen young fellows in large-scale farming employment being utterly spoiled for work. Had they been small farmers' sons, brought up to a personal sense of urgency, their bodily movements would have been very different.

How much better it would be than all this talk, to face the fact that farming is hard work and long hours, that food is always dearly won, whatever its money price, and let the *primary* appeal be to pride of workmanship rather than the pay-roll. The farmer's real reward is a good crop displayed before the passer-by. Success and failure alike are public. Recognize that farming must be the first really Christian way of life, thinking of giving before getting. Idealism apart, that is the only *practical* basis for it, because if you grudge an extra hour anywhere you begin to go downhill.

Another point not generally realized is how unvocal is the small farmer, that is, the average British farmer. Consider the time needed to attend meetings of such bodies as the National Farmers' Union or local agricultural committees. The good small farmer, whose advice would be most valuable, is just the man who cannot spare the time, because he is devoted to his land. The political farmer is either a big farmer with a bailiff to look after his place in his absence, or one to whom farming is a secondary interest. This is not to belittle the work of the

bodies concerned: farming must have its representative gatherings to be cohesive: but rather to deplore that so typical and valuable a section of farming is unrepresented. The ploughman cannot become Prime Minister in this era of professionalism—only the trade union official.

Really, this whole article was written years ago in the one sentence: 'The master's boot is the best manure.' But if you belong to All-Mechanized-Million-Acres Ltd., and don't use any, of course that old saying does not apply.





### XIII. INDUSTRIALISM COMES TO THE VILLAGE

By C. HENRY WARREN

MY own experience of the increasing industrialization of our villages is largely confined to East Anglia. But perhaps that is not without its advantages. Certainly there is no other similarly considerable area in England where the traditional rural way of life has been so rudely jolted out of its norm by the emergencies of war. Once this country had become a 'fortress,' it was evident that East Anglia would have to be a major jumping-off ground for any assault on the Continent by air. It was therefore not long before these peaceful acres became the scene of unparalleled activity. Field and farm, wood and meadow, disappeared overnight. Tarmac replaced the fertile clay that Tusser had tilled and Young had praised. Soon there was not a village in my part of the country that was not dominated by an aerodrome. Ploughmen drove their furrows on one side of the hedge, while bombers were warming up for a take-off on the other. Shepherds folded their sheep in the kale, while squadrons of fighters split the sky above them at tree-top height. That same countryside which had resisted the first feeble onslaughts of mechanization as fiercely as anywhere in this island now witnessed a mechanized invasion that was like a worse-than-Wellsian dream come true. In every village pub the farm-labourer, coming in from the fields at night, hobnobbed with airmen whose whole way of thinking was poles apart from his; and the effects of this strange contiguity—the speed and precision of the aeroplane versus the unhurrying purposefulness of the plough—can hardly be overestimated.

Indeed, this strange contiguity was rendered even stranger than it might otherwise have been by the fact that very soon the majority of these aerodromes were taken over by the American Air Force. Our quiet villages were suddenly invaded by men whose entire mental outfit was urban and mechanistic. Anybody who has listened to the conversation of these Americans in our pubs, or spoken with them on trains, or attended an 'Information,

Please' session at one of their aerodromes, will need no reminding how wide-eyed was the astonishment of these young men at finding themselves stationed in a countryside so lacking in what they considered the decent and ordinary amenities of life. They had been told that England was a civilized country; yet here were villages (and so near to London, judged by their own standards of distance, as to be considered next door to it) where there was no water laid on to the houses, no ice-box in the kitchen, no electric iron, not even indoor sanitation; and their wonderment seemed to imply that no people could call itself civilized, surely, that lacked such simple necessities as these. Not surprisingly, the East Anglian farm-hand's immediate reaction, as he listened to these overwhelming criticisms, was merely an enhanced sense of his own inferiority. All his past history had conditioned him for such an attitude. But as the months went by, and as his intimacy with the Americans ripened, his attitude began to change. Inferiority gave way to a smouldering dissatisfaction with his own lot. In a world of such plenty, why must *he* be denied the things that would, he considered, make life worth living at last?

All this, of course, was only the climax to a movement that had been going on for many years. It is true that on the surface there was still little to distinguish our East Anglian villages of to-day from those in which the pattern of faith-folk-food (as H. J. Massingham has expressed it) prevailed a century or so ago. The mill, like the church, might be empty; the few remaining craftsmen might be without apprentices and the squire without authority; the village trader might be fighting a losing battle against the multiple stores in the nearest town. But on the whole our villages still depended upon the fields that surrounded them. The pattern was cracking, but it had not yet quite fallen apart. It was already becoming something of a penalty, for instance, to the younger women to have to live in a village at all. To live outside the village, in the fields, they frankly refused to do. I have not forgotten the delight of a certain hay-cutter's wife in my parish when she finally managed to cajole her husband into quitting their isolated cottage in the lanes for one of the new council houses down in the village.

'It's all very well for my man,' I remember her saying; 'his work takes him all over the place. He meets people and hears what's going on. But what about me, tucked away here all day long, and nobody to pass the time of day with, and nothing to see but these old fields? Besides, my girl will soon have to go to school, and that will mean trudging a couple of miles night and morning. It isn't good enough.'

Well, she has her wish now. She is near the shops, near the buses, near the school; and all the talk of the village is at her own back door. And I must own she has every appearance of being a much happier woman. About her husband I am not quite so sure. He is a true countryman, a lover of solitude; but if he misses his evenings in the quiet garden, and if his home life is now hedged about with restrictions, he does not complain. All the same——

And I recall another incident, from about the same time, which seems to me equally indicative of the trend of rural life. One of my neighbours, a young cowman, informed me one evening that on the morrow he was starting work as a tractor driver. I had no idea he nursed any such ambition. Not only had he been a cowman all along, but a pride in stock had been the family trait for generations. Nevertheless, here he was, exchanging the white smock and skull-cap for a suit of blue dungaree; the milking-stool for a jolting iron seat on a tractor; and the warm smell of milk for the stifling fumes of tractor oil. And a happier man I never saw. 'Well,' he said, countering my surprise, 'that's better than being tied to an old cow's tail all your life, isn't it?'

Such instances, common enough in all conscience, showed how the pattern of rural life was falling apart even then. Already on the farms the envied job was the tractor driver's; and this was so, not only because (for some quite unfair and ultimately illogical reason) it was better paid, but also because it typified in advance the coming day of fully mechanized farming. Being tied to an old cow's tail, Sunday and weekday, was an ignominy that only a bumpkin would tolerate any longer; and the men of the younger generation were trying their hardest to squeeze a way out of a job that allowed them no leisure to explore those

new horizons which everywhere seemed to be opening up. As for the hay-cutter's wife, what else was her story but yet another variation on the external theme of woman's more volatile, exploring nature? Always woman has been in the vanguard of any movement for change.<sup>1</sup> (Was it not she, rather than her husband, who gave the migration from country to town its final impetus?) Having abandoned the greater part of her share in field work, and having, in addition, lost most of whatever delight she once had in housewifery, she now looks about for something more attractive than the sink and the wash-tub with which to occupy her increase of leisure. It is true that, between them, commercial enterprise (as exemplified in the cinema) and educative endeavour (as exemplified in the Women's Institutes) have done a great deal to help her fill this gap; but apparently there remains still much more to be done before she is finally persuaded that not only has she nothing to lose by living in the country, but everything to gain. Who shall blame the hay-cutter's wife, therefore, if she longed for a council house and could not be happy till she got it?

Not every fruit that grows on the tree of progress contains, as we are sometimes tempted to suppose, a maggot at the core. Both the cowman and the hay-cutter's wife were merely seeking to fulfil themselves, and I for one would not like to deny that they had succeeded—at any rate for the time being. And again: it would be generally agreed, I suppose, that one of the most obvious results of the adoption of a fully mechanized (or, if you prefer, industrialized) system of agriculture is a general speeding up of the pulse.<sup>2</sup> Is this too necessarily a bad thing? Admittedly, the countryman's proper clock is the sun and not a union time-sheet. Admittedly, also, the tempo both of the farmer and of the farm hand is necessarily conditioned by the slow,

<sup>1</sup> I should put it the other way round: that women are more likely than men to catch the winds of prevailing tendencies, and less likely than men to resist them.—EDITOR.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. George Henderson, in *The Farming Ladder*, has, I think, epitomized the true service of the tractor in: 'The real value of the tractor is to enable more thorough and careful cultivation to be made in a limited time, not simply to speed up the old methods.' This is the credit side; the debit one has been stated in Mr. Hosking's essay on pages 100–10.—EDITOR.

unpredictable rhythms of nature. Even so, could not the countryman's pulse perhaps do with a little speeding up? Might not a quickened pulse mean more blood pumped into the grey matter? Certainly the average countryman is still too prone to view all innovations with suspicion, and to confine his comments upon such to an unhelpful and negative criticism. East Anglian farmers have included more than a fair share of experimentalists; but most of them, from Townshend and his turnips and clover to Coke and his 'Whiggish sheep,' from Mecchi and his liquid manure irrigation to Darby and his 'Digger,' have met with little but scorn and derision from the agricultural community in general—and from neighbouring farmers in particular. And it is much the same even to-day. Any farmer who has received his training at an agricultural college will be well advised to keep the fact as dark as possible.<sup>1</sup> A favourite and much respected lecturer at one of our East Anglian agricultural institutions habitually prefaced his final address to his students with a warning that, when they took up farming for themselves, they should do as he had bidden them, but never let it be known where they had learned so to do.

Such, then, are some of the advantages which the industrialization of agriculture may well bestow upon the rural community. Sir William Beach Thomas has recently spoken of the English village as 'a nexus of civilized life beyond compare.' It may have been that once; and, if new blood were injected in the worn-out tissues, and if all who live on and by the land were invigorated with a healthier sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, it might be so once again. And since the industrialization of agriculture, wisely applied and morally controlled, is one of the means by which this might be brought to pass, it should be guided rather than condemned.<sup>2</sup> Progress must indeed come before preser-

<sup>1</sup> Not without reason. I have known too many instances where that training has induced ideas in the collegian's head which flatly deny good husbandry to doubt that this attitude is at least as often right as wrong.—EDITOR.

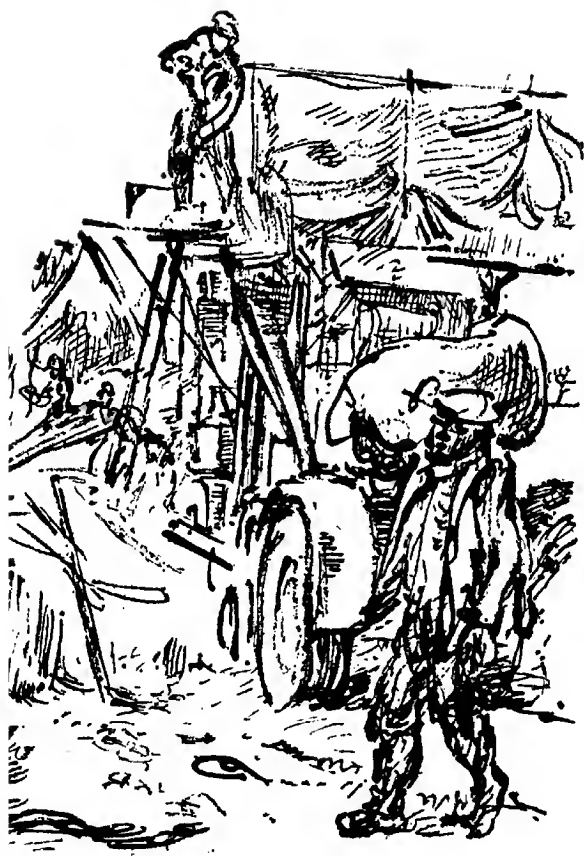
<sup>2</sup> Where, I should say, (1) it does not oust skilled labour; (2) where it does no harm to the land; (3) where it does not interpose itself between the man and the land; and (4) when it does not introduce purely urban notions.—EDITOR.

vation. But unhappily there *are* maggots in the fruit of progress—and some pretty healthy maggots at that!

I have noticed before now that country conversation has a habit, over a certain period, of returning again and again to a favourite theme. Both immediately before the war and since, wherever men of the farming fraternity were met together and had begun discussing (as invariably they do discuss) the pros and cons of the modern trends in agriculture, sooner or later somebody was bound to bring in the pride of the old-time horseman. The carter's care of his team had already become a legend. A favourite variation of this recurring theme told how a certain farmer, noticing that his stock of stable oats persistently diminished, decided to keep his corn-bins locked up at night. But still the oats disappeared. He therefore put somebody on the look-out for the thief. And who do you suppose the thief turned out to be? Why, none other than the old horseman himself, of course, who would creep down to the bins in the dead of night to steal an extra ration for his horses. I wonder if there isn't more in this continual reference to carter's pride than meets the eye? Might it not at bottom represent a sort of nostalgia for something that went out of fashion with the horse? Pride of work, shall we say? Have we not here an instinctive confession, on the part of the younger men on the land, that they fear they may have given away their birthright and that in any case the mess of pottage which they are now enjoying is not all it was cracked up to be? Certain it is that, unless a man has pride in his job, that job will in the end become merely a dead weight on his hands. And how shall any man have the same pride in a tractor, inanimate as it is, that he might have in a responsive, quivering, wilful horse? Of course, no modern farm hand would agree to this, but I am suggesting that the consciousness of it is there all the same.

Moreover, this lack of pride in work can very easily be accompanied by another and even more inauspicious lack—a lack of feeling for the land itself. As far back as 1894 Hasbach was deploring the hopeless position of the English farm hand in that he could never hope to aspire to the ownership of even a few acres; and before that Young, who had been one of enclosure's







most ardent champions, said much the same sort of thing when, towards the end of his life, he publicly declared that after all a man will love his country the better for a pig. When all is said, the possibility of the ownership of land remains the only incentive compatible with all that 'swynk and swot' ordained in Genesis. But the years have gone by, and in this respect at least the position of the farm-hand to-day is precisely what it was in Young's and Hasbach's day: he has as little hope now as then of achieving ownership, however humble. And this, I think, is still the root of the matter.

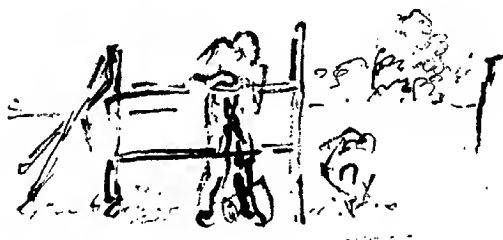
In Young's and Hasbach's day, however, he did have the spiritual compensation of pride in his work, interest in his job. Now he has not always even that. In other words, the machine may very well take away from him even that little which he had. Would it be any wonder, then, if this is the reason why he casts an obviously envious eye at the carter and his pride in his team? Would it be any wonder if, compelled by circumstance to cling to his work in the country, he grew more bewildered and dissatisfied every day and snatched at any catchpenny slogan that promised him still better amenities and brighter amusements with which to beguile the tedium of his dead-end lot?

Obviously the machine eases the drudgery of his job; but what is the price it too often exacts in exchange? In a word, boredom. It is the tendency of the machine, as its applicability to the tasks of farming increases, to make the work of the fields anti-social. It is not only that the men on the farms are fewer, but that they are more widely distributed, one here, one there, and rarely a communal job going on anywhere. Hoeing and beet-singling are almost the only jobs left now, before harvest, on which men may work together in the fields and enjoy the satisfaction that inevitably comes of communal effort. With a lighter and more manœuvrable tractor even beet-singling will soon be a one-man job; and since the war the combine-harvester has already taken all the social endeavour out of the cornfield. 'Folk were more *joyable* in those days, so they were,' I remember an old woman once saying to me; and I do not think she was compensating herself for past miseries by an instinctive concentration only on what had been good. Take away that sociable,

convivial, gossipy, companionable aspect of work in the fields and you take away a prime incentive to good husbandry. I have in mind at the moment a picture of the Rodings, in Essex, those heavy cornland parishes between Chelmsford and the Forest, as I saw them recently. There was natural fertility, if you like! But somehow it all seemed to proclaim a richness without joy, a sort of death-in-life. The fields had been extensively laid together for their better working since the advent of large-scale mechanization on the land. You may go for miles without meeting more than a solitary labourer working in the fields. Often there is not a cottage in sight anywhere. And the tumble-down church of Berners Roding, with bits of sacking flapping over the broken windows and the furniture dusted with the falling plaster, seems the final comment on a system of farming which more and more tends to eliminate the human factor.

And so it has come about that, although the structure of our villages still adheres in principle to the ancient, traditional pattern, in effect that pattern no longer holds. The village no longer depends, as it should, upon the fields that surround it. Its life has been cut off at the source. Certainly there is more variety in its social life to-day, but that benefit is largely offset by a loss of pride and satisfaction in the work of those for whom that social life is designed. And without this satisfaction, higher rates of pay, improved scales of living, and greater social amenities are likely to prove but dust and ashes in the mouth. It is useless for the hay-cutter's wife to exchange her lonely cottage, where she has no neighbours to talk to and must empty her slops into the nearest ditch, for a council house in the heart of the village; for in the end that too will pall—if not in her time, then in her child's—unless a new integration prevents the village from being degraded into an inferior version of the town. It is useless for the cowman to turn tractor driver; for what was wrong with his job before, though he did not know it, was not the fact that he was 'tied to an old cow's tail' for seven days a week, but that he had lost his feeling for the land itself and for the service of it. Cow or tractor, it is all one without this. Similarly, it is useless offering amenities for the enjoyment of farm hands equivalent to those offered for the enjoyment of factory workers, unless the

job that complements their leisure is of itself a satisfaction and a fulfilment. And I believe it can never be an adequate fulfilment until there is at least the opportunity, wisely and generously given, for every farm hand to achieve some measure of ownership of the land he is asked to serve. On that foundation the men of the fields will once more find pride and satisfaction in their work—eased of a great deal of their burden by the aid of the machine—and the village in which they live will once more deserve the proud description of ‘a nexus of civilized life beyond compare.’



## XIV. THE FUTURE OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT

By THE EARL OF PORTSMOUTH

A LIBERAL politician said some fifteen years ago that the landlord's rent came to him in the night while he slept. Now, this may be said to be true of interest from gilt-edged securities, but it would be utterly untrue even of bad agricultural landlords, of whom there are many.

Like farming, successful estate management is a protean business. There must be knowledge of good farming practice, and even more, a knowledge of good husbandry. Every estate owner of any size should possess and work a home farm, so that he is familiar with the conditions in which his tenants have to gain their living. He must know how his fences should be laid and his gates hung; he must know how his drains should be kept clear; how his buildings should be repaired, and the precautions his tenants should take to fulfil their obligations for the upkeep of land and buildings. Again, he or his agent must possess quite a considerable legal knowledge, in order to deal with the thousand and one generally ill-drafted and ill-conceived statutes and regulations which urban governments of the last thirty years have inflicted upon the landowner. Over and above that he should have a knowledge of forestry and conversion of timber from his own woods and coppices. He should be acquainted with animal husbandry, whereby to judge his tenants, as well as to set an example on his own farm; he should know something about horticulture; certainly he needs to be aware of the trials and struggles of the smallholder. Rural crafts come within his ken, such as brick-making, small woodwork, and other trades which may be established on his land. He should be intimately acquainted with the lives and conditions of the labouring men who serve the land in all its aspects. This implies a working familiarity with the upkeep of cottages, and ability to choose the right plans for the building or alteration of cottages to suit the needs and customs of the cottagers, for which no urban Ministry of Health can cater.

Lastly, he should be equipped to participate in local government, and to take a lead in the integration of rural life. His is no limited liability corporation; and, although the rules of orthodox modern economics may limit his practice, they should not taint his values. Like any other administrator, he should possess a shrewd eye for and a sound judgment of character, as well as draw upon a ready fund of patience and tact.

It may be objected that this inventory of desirables is a counsel of perfection and so that the landowning system must break down. In part this is true, as it is for all human systems, but breakdown has been the consequence rather of economic causes than of individual deficiency. But it must be admitted that the landowner has accepted too readily the majority's urban standards of economics and irresponsibility in the ownership of property. It is therefore worth examining the alternatives to the existing system.

The first is the complete break-up of estates into freehold parcels for yeomen proprietors. This, indeed, would be the almost ideal solution if it were workable. But in the last three centuries we have lost most of the instinct for peasant life. Where it has survived in eastern and central Europe, and where the peasant tradition is still dominant, the break-up of large estates has been, generally speaking, a failure, in that the ground work has not been sufficiently cultivated. Only in small countries like Denmark, where a long course of education has prepared the way and a peculiar condition of markets for export exists, has there been any real development in the capacity for yeoman farming. In our own country, the tenant-farmer who has purchased his land has for the most part been ignorant about the upkeep of buildings, and has suffered heavily from the divorce of woodland from farm and, above all, from the fact that by owning his farm he had no economic buffer to arm him against the bad times. The bank from which he borrowed had to satisfy shareholders and demand its pound of flesh at five per cent, while his old landlord rarely netted two per cent and in disastrous times remitted the rent. It is significant that a report, drawn up by weighty agricultural sociologists in the United States of America, recommends the English system of land tenure as an

objective which the United States of America would do well to adopt for nearly half its farmers.<sup>1</sup>

The other alternative is public ownership, with the farmer as the tenant of the State. It is often claimed that the nation will only be interested in a prosperous agriculture when the land belongs to it. But, whatever the system of land tenure, it is the individual who must work it in a country so small in area and of such variety in soils as ours. Every field needs individual treatment. The argument is just as faulty in other directions. In the past we have been notorious for our stingy and inconsiderate attitude towards soldiers and sailors and most civil servants, and these are the most completely nationalized of all State servants. Neither by soil nor character are we fitted to be socialized farmers. A country where the farmer and farm worker are in a small minority, such as ours, would be most unlikely to grant better conditions to its countrymen if land were nationalized; indeed, the expense involved would probably make the treatment worse. The upkeep of country buildings needs quick decisions rather than bureaucratic forms and committee delays. A few tiles off to-day means a whole roof to repair in a year's time.

For estate management, again, the integrated view is indispensable. Governments, by their nature, are split into various departments, and each subject is considered separately from the other. Forestry and farming, for instance, are ecological partners, and should not be separated into departments. The landlord, or his agent, or the owner-occupier, is in the best position to judge what his needs are as a whole. State administration is, therefore, inevitably more costly, gives rise to overlapping, specialization, and impossible delays. For land, above everything, the master's foot and the master's long intimate knowledge of local conditions are supremely necessary. Therefore, whatever the ultimate shape land tenure takes in England, the wise and organic way of improvement is reform from within of a system which, with all its faults, has carried English farming through over half a century of acute depression, and with such

<sup>1</sup> *Farm People and the Land after the War*. Planning Pamphlet No. 28, National Planning Association, Washington, U.S.A.

vitality that in five years of war it has almost doubled its output and saved the nation from starvation.

It is therefore on the basis of reform from within that this essay is written.

The landlord and tenant system has for years been decaying. Decay began with economic conditions which made it easier to maintain estates by the agency of outside business than by that of rent. This inevitably meant that landowning became subsidiary to the owner's interests in business and dividends from elsewhere. It was naturally complicated by high taxation and accelerated by the incidence of death duties on land. A fatalistic sense of inevitable dissolution took charge. Often, although the owner might spend most of his life upon his own land, he became in spirit and in administration more and more of an absentee, until he reached the position of considering it right and just for a young man to sell cars in Great Portland Street in order to be able to live on his own remaining acres. Therefore, if reform from within is to be undertaken, it must be through a restoration of the sense of ownership, which sees itself as a trustee for the present and the future, in return for the privilege of the past and the enjoyment of the present. All owners of land should regard that ownership as a full-time occupation, prepared for by a long-term education.

Where the professional services of an agent are required he should be highly trained, resident, and responsible to one owner, or a group of adjoining owners. Management by large multiple firms of land agents is a bad half-way house between bureaucratic administration and private ownership.

Death duties on land responsibly held by a private owner should only be charged when the owner divests himself of responsibility by selling the land. Continuity and security for tenant, farmer, and labourer alike will otherwise disappear under the constant threat of sales enforced for the payment of death duties. For the ordinary tenant farmer and the farm labourer, security, stability, and reasonable farm prices are necessary. The landlord in most cases has to take an even longer view than his tenant, in forestry and building improvements especially.

It is therefore essential for him to have economic and territorial security if his job is to be properly done.

Rents, whatever form they take, should never be more than enough to pay for the full upkeep of farm buildings; cottages, farmhouses, etc., provide a small sinking fund for gradual improvement and development, together with a modest income to the landlord for his continuous trouble, knowledge, foresight, and administration.

In general, land that brings in an average net income of two per cent when all outgoings have been paid should be sufficient. This should include the payment of an agent should such be desired. The landlord himself should be a farmer, and therefore, so far as the land is concerned, such extra income as he may need should come from this source. The non-farming landlord has almost insuperable obstacles to overcome before he can understand his tenants' difficulties or co-operate with them in person.

Just as the house and the farm buildings of the farm should be adapted to its size and productivity, so the landowner's house ought not to be larger than the capacity of the estate to provide for its upkeep, after farmer and labourer upon it have been paid their just reward. In other words, the manor, or mansion, should never be out of proportion to the land its owner serves.

Finally, the land has been bled of capital. Modern requirements demand greatly increased capitalization, for farm buildings, electricity, water supply, and new cottages. A system of national credit and perhaps the formation of land banks should take the place of the present system of overdrafts and mortgages, which are not only onerous, but disastrous by reason of the insecurity involved. Rates of interest should be as low as possible, to the nation's ultimate benefit. Under a reformed system of finance, the issue of credit for long-term improvements need not demand an interest of more than one-half per cent. But, under such a system of supplying capital, the landowner should not benefit from it by demanding an increase of rent, beyond, say, one per cent per annum for the increased costs of administration after allowing for amortization and replacement. Even if capital for such purposes is issued at two and a half per



cent, the same should apply as to the landowner's share in annual increment.

The landowner's part in reform can therefore be summed up as long-term training for his work, and an administration of the land regarded as his greatest full-time responsibility. Access to cheap capital he should be prepared to use for improvements without any net gain to himself, other than a very small fraction in recompense for the extra work of administration. He should not regard his dwelling as something to be kept up at the cost of the land. In return, he should be relieved of death duties on his land, only for so long as he holds it.

Thus we see that responsible ownership of private property could be, and often is, the cheapest and on the average the most efficient method of administration yet devised by society. Moreover, it conforms with man's instinct to perpetuate and build for the future and his family. If ownership is not responsible, then in the long run the family must suffer; social give and take and mutuality within society are necessary for its preservation. Ownership which is purely anarchic, with every man for himself, leads to instability and a dissolution of the national and family life. It is from our anarchic and selfishly individualistic standards in the last three hundred years that the present clamour for State ownership has arisen.

Ownership cannot afford to be static and merely to make the best of the *status quo*. Farming will have to improve vis-à-vis to business interests. That improvement must come partly by better methods but principally by co-operation between neighbours. For this the landlord could and should be the natural focus. To secure stability as well as real progress it is necessary for the status and the opportunities of the farm worker to be restored. The more widely small ownership is spread, the greater will be security and opportunity. The practical aim of the landlord should be to develop both equipment and arts in the interests of the small family farm on the one hand, and of trades ancillary to agriculture on the other.

Throughout the country there are many pockets of land suitable for small holdings, practising dairy-farming, pig-keeping, poultry-keeping, and horticulture. They do not fit in with large-scale

land settlement schemes, suitable only in the more fertile areas, such as the Fens and the lower Thames valley. These very scattered pockets could best be developed under the landowner's private enterprise. There is room for an increase of about fifty thousand holdings of this kind. The landowner is peculiarly well fitted to establish holders from among the competent and deserving farm workers in the neighbourhood, and also to sift applicants from the services and the factories in the demobilization period.

With sufficient cheap capital these holdings could be created out of larger farms without upsetting their balance; probably no more than ten per cent of land need be subtracted from any individual farm to create these holdings. The mere creation of holdings, however, is not sufficient. The landlord, or group of landlords, larger farmers, and owner-occupiers should be prepared to set up central farms, which could supply the holders with their stock and most of their feeding stuffs and where necessary to collect and process the produce. They should be prepared also to undertake the heavy cultivations necessary on the holdings, together with any threshing and large-scale compost turning. There should be balanced interplay between the fertility removed from the central farm and the small holdings for foodstuffs and the equivalent in dung returned. This in turn implies active co-operation and partnership between landowner and holder.

From the processing side, these reforms would stimulate wider opportunities in village life. Packing stations, small canning, butter, or cheese factories would all give facilities in a variety of occupations for adolescents in the country. Again, the more numerous the holdings, the more scope for local processing, and the greater variety of ancillary crafts, in building, forestry, woodwork, and so forth. The ideal at which successful estate management should aim is the integration of rural life and an ever-expanding variety of relevant local industries, which in turn will encourage an ever-expanding and varied local craftsmanship.

If the landowner has to pay no death duties until he sells his property, and if he has been provided with capital for long-term improvement at the lowest existing rate of interest; then the

State has the right to insist upon the fulfilment of his obligations in estate management. The War Agricultural Committees at present have the right to terminate a farmer's tenancy if he is farming badly, and to take possession of land in cases of owner-occupation, or in certain instances where the landlord has allowed buildings to go derelict. With due safeguards a body analogous to the War Agricultural Committee should have the right, not only to terminate the tenancies of farmers who are grossly neglecting their land, but to dispossess landlords who cannot, or will not, fulfil their responsibilities once they have had access to cheap capital. This should apply as much to forestry as to farming, and in serious cases of dereliction of duty, possession should be taken without compensation. Reform from within will always need this spur to protect the good owner, as well as the nation, from the backslider.

The present system of a money rent is the least satisfactory way of making the landlord a responsible partner in the working of the soil. It also offers no encouragement to co-operation among farmers, and is a deterrent to the potential integration of an estate. Where the processing of local products takes place through the agency of a landlord, or group of local owners, it should be possible for rent to be deducted in kind. The more orderly the system of marketing the easier this should become. Farmer and landlord would thus become partners in demonstrating a higher standard of quality in produce and in stock. Thus, the landlord would share the bad harvests and low prices, while he would benefit from the reverse. This reforms should be introduced gradually and voluntarily.

In farming especially, cash return itself rarely represents true values over short periods. For newly established small holders, this system should go even further, with enhanced benefit to holder and landowner. The landowner could supply the stock and a good deal of the mechanical equipment; he could also buy for his holders supplies of feeding stuffs and fertilizers. As the selling agent, he could deduct the price of the purchased material and his own share in the produce sold for rent. By that means he could also ensure a high standard of breeding, hygiene, and uniformity among the small holder's animals. Small herds of

cattle, pigs, or a flock of chickens give the best results from individual attention, while this system would encourage the individual small holder to concentrate upon the highest quality of stock. One other advantage is that the small holder would be saved from the dangers of being drawn into the maelstrom of debt.

As has been suggested earlier in this essay, many landowners' houses are too large for the land to support them. Some of these could be turned into schools and other public institutions, but this is by no means an ideal solution. Of old, church and manor were the heart of village life. There is no reason why the manor should not again become a focus of local self-sufficiency. Nearly all of the large houses have wings or rooms which could be separated from the dwelling quarters. These could be used for a great variety of activities. They could be centres for lectures and social activities; they could be used for reading rooms and clinics. In many cases, especially by the use of out-buildings, they could be turned into small jam-making establishments for preserving surplus fruit and vegetables, bake-houses, curing and smoking rooms for the cottage pigs, and store-houses for village produce. They could also be centres of weaving and other local crafts.

Modern transport enables qualified persons to travel over long distances for the purpose of giving instruction. Even during the war it has been proved that the Home Guard can be trained in their villages and need not go to the centres of training. Thus, the landowner could, and should, turn the spare space in his own home to use for the village or villages which he serves. Such a development would counteract the tendency to take people to large centres for adult education and continuation classes, which always has a disintegrating effect upon the life of the village.

Manor and mansion could thus be used to ensure that the food which the village grows can be consumed at home instead of returning after expensive processing elsewhere through many middlemen, to the cost of local pockets, life, and interest.

## PART V

### LIST OF BOOKS

#### *AGRICULTURE*

A. E. (G. W. Russell).

CO-OPERATION AND NATIONALITY. A vivid account of the co-operative farming movement in Ireland, of which the author was a leader together with Sir Horace Plunkett.

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fifty years ago.

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